Commentary

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How Eminent Physicists Have Lent Their Names to a Politicized Report on Strategic Defense

Angelo M. Codevilla

The Imperial Congress
George Szamuely

Israel: A House Divided?
Ruth R. Wisse

Reclaiming the Catholic Heritage
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The Succession—A Story
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Salinger Then and Now
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Books in Review: David Vital / Peter Shaw / Leslie Lenkowsky / Nelson W. Polsby / Jeffrey Marsh / Roger Kaplan

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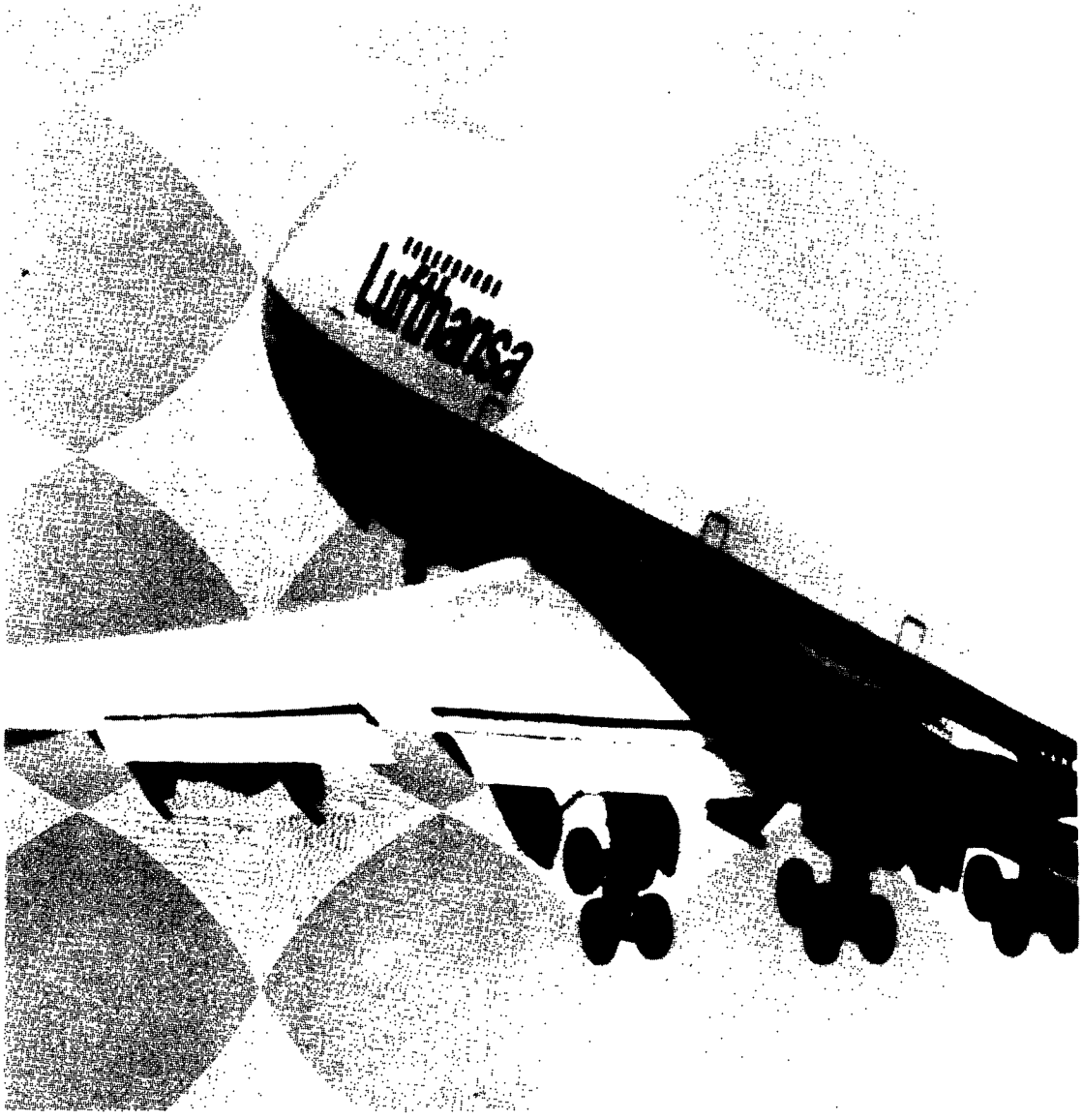

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Letters from Readers

On Seweryn Bialer

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

In one respect, Nick Eberstadt's review of Seweryn Bialer's book, *The Soviet Paradox: External Expansion, Internal Decline*, is very clever and very evil ["The Latest Myths About the Soviet Union," May]. In a most skillful way he manages to leave in the reader's mind the impression that what he regards as Bialer's misguided views have something to do with his Communist past and his current access to the Soviet elite, but without writing the words directly. Planting thoughts of this sort while avoiding libel is a considerable talent.

It is all done with suggestive but elliptical references: Bialer as "no ordinary refugee," but a man who had been very important to the Polish regime, one of the first to have joined its *apparat*, and who had risen amazingly fast and done exceptionally well. Bialer's early association with the Citizens' Militia is introduced with a sly reference to "the Polish police," evoking for a lingering instant not the militia or street police, which this organization was, but the political or security police. How odd, Mr. Eberstadt implies, that someone who had been so much a part of the East and then turned his back on it would be welcomed by Soviet intellectuals and political figures thirty years later. How in tune, he stops just short of saying, that a subtle, misleading book like Bialer's appears in an era when the Soviets have become so skilled in manipulating innocent and gullible Western audiences.

I am writing not because underhanded innuendo like this matters to its target or because it is anything other than a bizarre, almost laughable outrage for anyone who has even the most fleeting acquaintance with Bialer. My distress has to do with the mode of argument. Are we, in some quarters, sinking back into a period when attacking the substance of an argument is not good enough? When analyses are not merely to be disputed, but their author's character blackened?

ROBERT LEGVOLD
Director
Harriman Institute for Advanced Study of the Soviet Union
Columbia University
New York City

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

As long-time readers of COMMENTARY, and admirers of Nick Eberstadt's work, we were more than a little disturbed by his essay on Seweryn Bialer's *The Soviet Paradox* as were also others to whom we have talked.

We do not feel expert enough to discuss the issues, but we can discuss the tone of the article. It is, we fear, rather snide, as well as dangerously close to being *ad hominem*. There are times when such tones are appropriate. We have as little patience as any of your readers with members of the self-righteous Left who do not have the decency to apologize for their past sins even as they commit new ones. However, Bialer is a quite different case. One may disagree with him but it is impossible to deny his commitment to freedom. He has no illusions about the Soviet Union, and strongly acknowledges the moral superiority of a liberal democratic order.

Mr. Eberstadt has an excellent reputation among a broad public which he has influenced in important ways. Essays of this kind may bring kudos from a relatively small group which feels very intensely about the issue involved. But in the long run it will, we fear, only reduce his effectiveness within the broader public he seeks to convince.

Please leave articles of this type to magazines like the *Nation*. Nick Eberstadt, COMMENTARY, and Seweryn Bialer all deserve better.

STANLEY ROTHMAN
STANLEY ELKINS
Smith College
Northampton, Massachusetts

NICK EBERSTADT writes:

I find it somewhat peculiar that both Robert Legvold and Messrs. Stanley Rothman and Stanley Elkins have focused so closely on questions of personality, to the exclusion of all other issues in the article to which they object. "The Latest Myths About the Soviet Union," as its title alone should suggest, was not a personality profile.

Mr. Legvold does not address any portion of my critique of Bialer's arguments—arguments, it should be noted, with which Mr. Legvold's name has sometimes also been identified. Moreover, Mr.

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Issues of the Information Age:

The way beyond Babel.

Imagine trying to build a railroad system if every locomotive manufacturer used a different track gauge. Every local stretch of railroad had its own code of signals. And in order to ride a train, you needed to know the gauges and the signals and the switching procedures and the route and the conductor's odd pronunciation of the station names.

The business of moving and managing information is in a similar state today. Machines can't always talk to each other. Proprietary systems and networks abound, with suppliers often jockeying to make theirs the de facto standard. The enormous potential of the Information Age is being dissipated by incompatibility.

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Legvold poses as the defender of a colleague unjustly accused, yet he does not challenge or contradict any of my statements about Bialer's life story, most of which (as it happens) came directly from Bialer's own congressional testimony, and all of which are relevant to the authority he commands as an interpreter of the Soviet system. (Mr. Legvold does raise a point of interpretation about the Citizens' Militia; he may be unaware that what he calls "street police" were the principal instrument by which the Polish state destroyed all independent political parties and liquidated all organized resistance in the period from 1945 to 1951.)

Insofar as it fails to dispute my argument or even question my facts, Mr. Legvold's letter would itself seem little more than an *ad hominem* attack. This style of discourse is disappointing in a scholar, not to say in a man of Mr. Legvold's considerable reputation.

I thank Messrs. Rothman and Elkins for their kind estimation of my writings.

Interfaith Dialogue

To the Editor of Commentary:

Howard Singer's article, "The Rise and Fall of Interfaith Dialogue" [May], is written from the perspective of one who, by his own admission, dismissed dialogue twenty years ago and now wants to tell those Jews who have engaged in its painstaking process, "I told you so." But to achieve this self-congratulatory goal, Mr. Singer has to be very selective with the facts. . . .

Just what is this dialogue that Mr. Singer summarily eschews? From the point of view of the practitioner, it is far more than the numerous official Church documents, both Catholic and Protestant, that sanction it. And it is certainly far more, in scope and depth, than the formal meetings between Christian and Jewish leaders that serve both to offer critiques of the official statements and to provide an ongoing framework for further work in the field.

Rather, "the dialogue" is an interlocking network of efforts being made by thousands of people on all levels of the Church and of Jewish communal life. It includes, to list only a few of the many activities Mr. Singer conveniently ignores, such efforts as textbook revision and teacher guidelines designed to eliminate all vestiges of the "teaching of contempt," which Mr. Singer (violating his own principles) erroneously declares to be "central to Christian theology." Many of these educational materials which came out of U.S. dialogue have already been translated into other languages, for example, into Spanish by CELAM (the Latin American Bishops' Conference), and will have an immense and positive impact throughout the world.

Dialogue includes thousands of training programs for Christian teachers carried on jointly by Jewish agencies and Christian groups over the last twenty years to ensure that Judaism is presented positively in the classroom and from the pulpit.

Dialogue includes hundreds of ongoing groups of Christians and Jews in parishes and synagogues throughout the country who meet regularly in mutual esteem to learn from each other and to act together in their communities. Programs coming out of these groups cover the entire spectrum of social action ranging from soup kitchens and civil-rights efforts to joint opposition to racism and explorations of biomedical ethics.

Dialogue includes the growing phenomenon of interfaith *Yom Hashoah* services, to preserve the memory of the six million, to challenge Christian consciences, and to refute revisionist denials of the Holocaust. In one Catholic diocese within the past year, for example, a "Service of Reconciliation" was held on Palm Sunday at the cathedral. In another, a statue memorializing the Jewish victims of the Holocaust was erected on the cathedral grounds. Such realities only came to be through dialogue.

Dialogue includes joint action for Soviet Jewry and statements of support regarding a plethora of local and national issues of mutual concern. Representatives of the National Conference of Catholic Bishops, for example, have spoken up to condemn the obscene United Nations resolution on Zionism as racism, to urge the President not to go to Bitburg, and to challenge the anti-Semitic tirades of such as the Ku Klux Klan, the Christian Identity Churches, and the Reverend Louis Farrakhan.

At the risk of sounding self-congratulatory myself, since I was a co-editor along with Rabbis James Rudin and Marc Tanenbaum of *Twenty Years of Jewish-Catholic Relations* (Paulist Press, 1986), I believe a recent review in the magazine *Sh'ma* by Rabbi Eugene Borowitz deserves consideration: "Jews skeptical of dialogue with Catholics will not want to read this volume, not the least reason being that they will have to invent new reasons for their negativity. Continuity, grass-roots change, scholarly depth, the ability to disagree firmly and the virtue of understanding one another better, all manifest themselves unmistakably in this impressive volume."

The volume, of course, chronicles the failures as well as the successes of dialogue since the Second Vatican Council. Indeed, I would say that we still have much farther to go than we have come. Dialogue is still in its infancy, from the perspective of the almost twenty centuries of misunderstanding that preceded it. But it was barely embryonic when Mr. Singer first denounced it in 1967. And his reasons, as exemplified perhaps by his need to rely on Rabbi Soloveitchik's twenty-year-old dictum, have not been modified by the facts and events that have occurred in the interim. One would think that twenty years would have been sufficient time for Mr. Singer to invent new reasons.

A number of misleading statements made by Mr. Singer need to be clarified for the record. First, he describes the Second Vatican Council as "exonerating Jews of guilt for the crucifixion." This is a misrepresentation, as the 1974 Statement on Catholic-Jewish Relations (a document of which Mr. Singer seems unaware) made clear in precisely this context: "The truth is that the Council acknowledged that the Jewish people *never were*, nor are they now, guilty of the death of Christ" (emphasis added).

Secondly, *contra* Singer, *Nostra Aetate* nowhere states or in any way implies "that Judaism had been superseded, that after Jesus the Jewish people were superfluous in God's salvation plan, that Jewish corporate existence was without value." All of these statements are Mr. Singer's own invention, not statements of the Council. While it is true that the Council did not address these issues—and that was a weakness of the text—subsequent statements have done so. The 1985 Vatican "Notes," expanding on a reference in the 1974 Vatican *Guidelines* (two more documents Mr. Singer missed), state that: "The history of Judaism did not end

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with the destruction of Jerusalem. . . . It continued . . . to carry to the whole world a witness—often heroic—of its fidelity to the One God. . . . The permanence of Israel is a historic fact and a sign to be interpreted within God's design."

Thirdly, I would like to know more about Mr. Singer's allegation that "Jewish laymen" (no women?) have been given missionary tracts as part of dialogue proceedings. This would be a very serious breach of the rules of dialogue, violating not only our 1967 Secretariat *Guidelines* (which Mr. Singer *does* cite) but also our more recent 1985 *Guidelines* (which he doesn't). These state, I believe clearly, that: "Proselytism, which does not respect human freedom, is carefully to be avoided. While the Christian, through the faith life of word and deed, will always witness to Jesus as the risen Christ, the dialogue is concerned with the permanent vocation of the Jews as God's people, the enduring values that Judaism shares with Christianity, and that, together, the Church and the Jewish people are called upon to witness to the whole world."

In 1982, a national survey was taken of Catholic educators. They were asked to react to two statements: "Judaism still plays a unique role of its own in God's plan of salvation" and "the Jewish covenant with God has never been revoked by God; the Jews remain 'people of God.'" Ninety-two percent responded affirmatively to the first statement, 85 percent affirmatively to the second. With all respect, I would submit that the figures would likely have been equally high in the negative twenty years ago. Does dialogue work? The facts speak for themselves.

EUGENE J. FISHER
Executive Secretary
National Conference of Catholic Bishops
Secretariat for Catholic-Jewish Relations
Washington, D.C.

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

As a Christian subscriber to COMMENTARY, I was dismayed by Howard Singer's article in the May issue. His position that Christians and Jews share no theological common ground and that there is little reason to speak of a Judeo-Christian tradition is wrong and, moreover, historically dangerous. . . .

In 1973, a Jewish historian of what is commonly called the intertestamentary period, Geza Vermes of Oxford University, put forth the argument that "the person of Jesus is to be seen as part of 1st-century charismatic Judaism and as the paramount example of the early Hasidim or Devout [ones]." Moreover, Vermes pointed out in his book, *Jesus the Jew*, that in the Judaism of Jesus's day, the expression "son of God" was used to denote a just man. . . .

Vermes's work demonstrates the possibility of dialogue. Scholars who attempt to reconstruct the Aramaic underlying the Greek text of the Gospels have brought to light many common elements between the two religions. Jesus thought as a Jew and taught as a Jew. His prayerbook was the Psalms. His principal prayer, composed in Aramaic verse, is at least first cousin to another prayer in Aramaic, the Kaddish. He is reported to have prefaced his statement of the two greatest commandments, to love God and to love your neighbor, with recitation of the *Sh'ma* as their basis. It is through Jesus that gentiles can come to know, and possibly to live, this essentially Judaic core.

Mr. Singer speaks of Christian doctrines affecting Jews that were "not merely accidental accretions but central to Christian theology" and "caused or contributed to unspeakable injury to millions of innocent people." Is not his charge one of the existential complicity of Christians as such in the Holocaust? Is it not then the mirror image of the Christian charge of the existential complicity of Jews as such in the murder of Jesus? The requirements of responsible conduct call for an end to existential charges and recriminations about wrongs beyond the capacity of the living to correct.

Dialogue can promote the correction of the correctable. It is true, as Mr. Singer observes, that the Gospels would never be edited to remove the reported cry of the crowd for Jesus's execution. Not even the Pope can do that. But that cry can be put into proper perspective. Historical research suggests that the entire narrative of the crucifixion was originally fixed in Christian tradition as part of the liturgy of the early Church in Jerusalem. Thus, in the Church today it is the Christian congregation that gives forth and participates in the cry of the crowd. Given time, an awakened awareness of one's own sinfulness, as intended by the restoration of the cry to its liturgical context, can protect against the disturbing derailment of the Christian message made visible in the film *Shoah*, for example, when the accusation of "Christ-killing" is raised in another crowd, this time the one in front of the Polish church. . . .

Even on points of profound theological difference between Christians and Jews, there may be some underlying existential unity. For example, one element common to both religions is the symbol of the Suffering Servant of God. Judaism and Christianity do differ theologically on this point, with Judaism interpreting the relevant passages of Isaiah as referring to Israel collectively and Christianity interpreting them as applying to Jesus. But there is no contradiction in recognizing that the Suffering Servant of Isaiah formed part of both the individual consciousness of Jesus and that of the Jewish people collectively. Thus, despite the inevitable inconsistencies between the respective logics of the two religions, it is possible to discern an underlying spiritual kinship. Both Jews who practice the faith of their fathers and Christians who would imitate Jesus participate, via different routes, in a common element forming their consciousness. . . .

On the basis of solid historical evidence, Geza Vermes concludes that an authentic place belongs to Jesus within Judaism. He urges one to take to heart the words of Buber: "We Jews know him in a way—in the impulses and emotions of his essential Jewishness—that remains inaccessible to the gentiles subject to him."

We Christians have a need for Jews to share that knowledge. . . . For the sake of what we do have in common, Christians and Jews should seek to strengthen, not weaken, each other. Neither should engage in polemical fratricide, even if only in print.

W.T. TÊTE
New Orleans, Louisiana

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

Reading Howard Singer's article was deeply troubling to me. . . . I cannot agree with his thesis that . . . anti-Semitism is an inseparable component of Christian theology. Indeed, in arriving at this provocative conclusion, Mr. Singer both misrepresents traditional Christian

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theology and ignores the real challenge facing all religious people today.

Writing as a Catholic, I contest Mr. Singer's view that whole portions of Catholic theology must be excised in order to expunge anti-Semitism. That anti-Semitism has been present (often as a dynamic) in the Church since shortly after its founding, and that it has been both preached and justified in various permutations over two millennia is indisputable. Where Mr. Singer goes astray is in arguing that it is a veritable article of faith. It is not. This may be, as Mr. Singer writes in another context, a "fine distinction lost on many Jews," but I assure him that in Catholicism, the distinction is essential.

Mr. Singer's most egregious comments about Christian, especially Catholic, theology are employed in his explanation of the Church's failure to recognize Israel. Using a disparaging remark by Pope Innocent III to buttress an argument that Catholic doctrine requires that Jews be ever homeless, scattered, and miserable is disingenuous. One cannot fairly indict Catholic doctrine on the strength of an anti-Semitic remark made by an anti-Semite—even if the anti-Semite is a Pope.

In dissecting the many flaws in the Christian character as he sees it, Mr. Singer makes much of the Christian propensity to view itself as part of a "Judeo-Christian" continuum. "But the truth," he writes, ". . . was that there existed no more reason to talk of a Judeo-Christian tradition than of a Judeo-Islamic or Greco-Christian tradition." On the narrow point, as Mr. Singer draws it, I agree. Christianity cannot look toward Judaism, as it is understood by Jews, for its own legitimacy; doing so ignores two thousand years of history. However, Mr. Singer must know that the term "Judeo-Christian" is a commonly used misnomer for "Western culture," and it is Western culture that is the target of so many diatribes ostensibly focused on Judeo-Christian matters.

Finally, Mr. Singer failed in his piece to answer forthrightly the question of why conservative Christians and Orthodox Jews despaired of the concept of interfaith dialogue. He would have done a service to his readers had he noted that this despair was rooted in two primary fears (since substantially realized): that the concept was foolishly utopian; and that serious articles of faith would be trivialized so that they could be viewed as mere parochialisms to be poked fun at condescendingly by the oh-so-sophisticated folk who generally populate these gatherings.

I suppose this last point is what so deeply troubled me about the article. Instead of attempting to find anti-Semitic bugs under the blanket of Christianity, Mr. Singer could have used his considerable talent to tell us of people who have so little confidence in their own faith that they must gather together in a sort of mutual demeaning society. It is this aspect of the so-called interfaith dialogue which needs to be studied, for it is this aspect that most clearly shows the decay of the great religions.

EDWARD A. ORLANDO, JR.
New Orleans, Louisiana

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

No doubt the cycle of hope, irritation, anger, and reconciliation described in Howard Singer's article will be repeated many more times before a truly ecumenical spirit pervades relations between Christians and Jews. While I might agree that dialogue has been a symptom more than a cause of the decline of anti-Jewish attitudes, I firmly believe that it will be a cause of pro-Jewish attitudes in the future.

Recent discussions I have had with Annette Daum, coordinator for the Department of Interreligious Affairs for the Union of American Hebrew Congregations, and Eugene Fisher, Executive Secretary of the American Bishops' Secretariat for Catholic-Jewish relations, suggests that remarkable progress has been made in the past few years. . . .

As an instance of why continued dialogue is imperative and productive, let me cite remarks by the Most Reverend Howard J. Hubbard, speaking before 1,200 Catholics and Jews on Palm Sunday of this year. "The roots of anti-Semitism," Reverend Hubbard said, "are deeply embedded in Christian history and tradition and yet most Christians are totally ignorant of this sordid page of history. . . ." He went on to say that it was "imperative" for Catholics to "insert the complete and unvarnished record of Jewish persecution into our history books and religious classes and acquaint ourselves with the systematic degradation of the Jewish people and with the fact that up to ten million Jews were murdered in the centuries before the Holocaust. . . ."

In his talk with me Mr. Fisher described a "virtual explosion of works on both the scholarly and popular level which have been produced in the last few years." Among them are Edward J. Flannery's book, *The Anguish of the Jews* (Paulist Press, 1985), which is a most scholarly description of twenty-three centuries of anti-Semitism. "By tracing out the origin and development of Jew hatred," Father Flannery writes, "this ageless evil will be banished from history and from the depths of the modern (and Christian) soul." As though to underscore the importance of dialogue, he gives special thanks in his book to those Jews who took part in discussions with him following some 250 lectures at various temples and Jewish centers. These discussions, he writes, gave him an insight into anti-Semitism that could never be picked up in books and scholarly symposia.

Another vote for dialogue was made by Paul Tillich, writing in *Judaism*, when he asked, "Are the common elements in both so strong that . . . Judaism and Christianity belong to each other? . . . I answer in the affirmative. . . . And if theological and historical studies had left any doubt in my mind, the encounter with Jews who live through the presence of their God and who are able to give expression to it, would have convinced me."

Finally, Franz Mussner in his *Tractate on the Jews* (Fortress Press, 1984), describes "a learning process of many years, a true changing of the mind.". . . This major work sketches a comprehensive Christian theology of Judaism and attempts to understand Judaism on its own terms. Without breaking from the Christian tradition, the author provides a positive assessment of Judaism's significance for the Christian faith. At the same time he provides the foundation for a similar study from the Jewish perspective.

In the meantime, I agree with Mr. Fisher that we will wait and work but not alone. Judaism and Christianity stand side by side, firm in the faith. Together, despite our differences in belief, we will work

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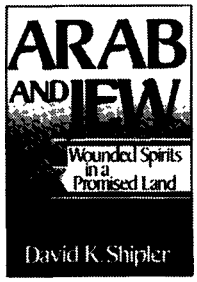

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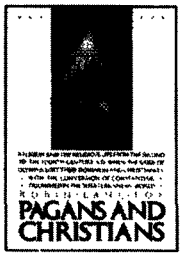

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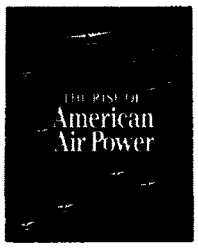

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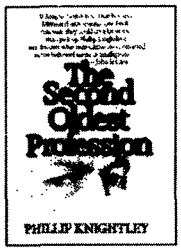

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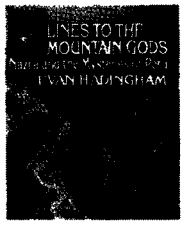

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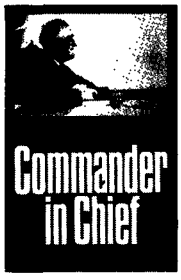

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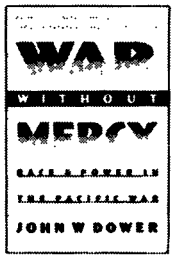

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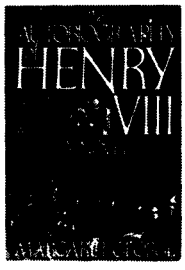

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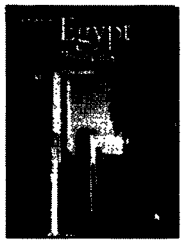

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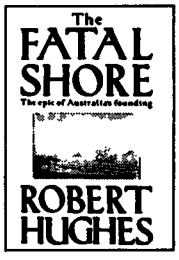

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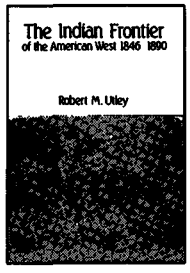

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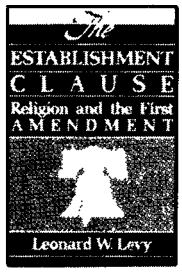

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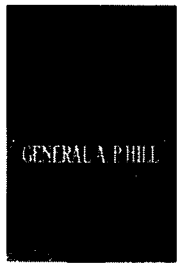

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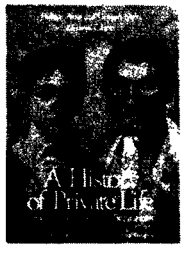

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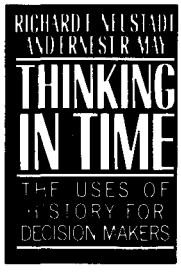

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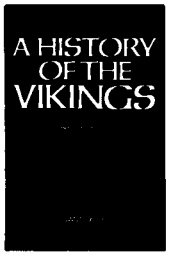

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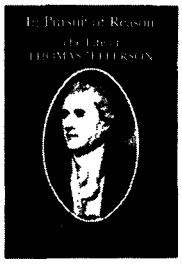

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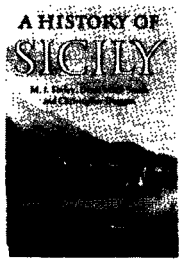

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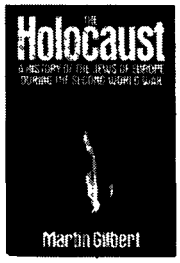

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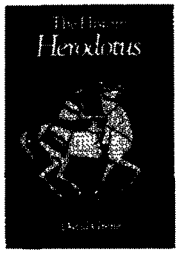

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toward a common goal to build the Kingdom of God on earth. No doubt we shall experience the rise and fall (and rise) of interfaith dialogue many more times while working toward the fulfillment of our prophetic dreams and prayers.

ALVIN SAMUELS
New Orleans, Louisiana

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

In "The Rise and Fall of Interfaith Dialogue" Howard Singer . . . concludes that it is Christian theology that has caused Judaism to come off badly in the last twenty-five years of interfaith dialogue.

Mr. Singer suggests that there should be more understanding today between Jews and Christians than there was in the 3rd century and cites as an instance of 3rd-century thinking the idea, which he finds still current among Christians, that the Jews are peculiarly obdurate and blinded by their own worldly ambitions. Contrary to Mr. Singer, I believe that the Christian perspective on Judaism has in fact changed over the centuries. The idea of Jewish obduracy, for example, does not hold among all Christians today, for today the Christian faith is viewed as a free, undeserved divine gift—a new creation by virtue of grace. It is considered wrong to hold whole classes of people personally responsible for not embracing it, since conversion does not depend so much on the person himself, but rather on God to supply the gift. . . .

The foremost living Swiss theologian, Hans Urs von Balthasar, shows the same concern about being fair to Judaism as Mr. Singer does. In his essay, "The Church of Jews and Gentiles Today," he first shows how Christianity needs Judaism to justify itself . . . and then goes further to raise the question fundamental to the legitimacy of Christianity: Could the Church "truly transcend Israel's ancient national religion"? More sensitive to truth than ordinary dialoguers, von Balthasar answers that ". . . the Old Covenant with its promises ('salvation comes from the Jews') . . . cannot simply be invalidated. . . . They have been favored with God's Torah and His prophetic word . . . and with promises according to which Israel . . . was destined to become the lodestone around which everything mundane would collect and orient itself."

Moving on to speak of the contemporary spiritual development of Judaism, von Balthasar writes that the Jews ". . . represent today more than ever a spiritual world power . . . of great historical force. . . . Christianity's source, its Jewish locus of origin, is just as significant nowadays as it ever was and will remain ineradicably so until the end of the world. . . ."

Von Balthasar's comment about the ineradicable significance of Judaism is important, for what Howard Singer fears most from interfaith dialogue is that it will be used for Christian proselytizing of Jews. But von Balthasar's arguments showing that the Jewish people are not ready for conversion are convincing enough to make Christians hesitate to proselytize. . . .

JUAN FELIPE CONNEALLY, S.J.
Loyola High School
Los Angeles, California

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

Howard Singer . . . plants the seeds for the refutation of his own thesis very early in his article when he says that interfaith activity is a relatively recent development. He's correct. Interfaith dialogue is in its infancy. Had my grandfather known that the first meeting on the Pope's itinerary for his trip to the U.S. was to be with Jews, he would have been in a total state of disbelief. If the truth be told, so would my father. And because interfaith dialogue is at its infancy stage, it must be treated as such—not as a final product, but as a precocious beginning.

Mr. Singer cites as an example of Jewish-Christian relations Charles Coughlin and Gerald L.K. Smith, and the failure of the Church to denounce them. Isn't it unfortunate that a thesis on dialogue should lean so heavily on pre-dialogue history to make its statement about the contemporary Church? Wouldn't it be better to talk about such individuals as John Cardinal O'Connor, not only in the context of our disagreement with him over comments he made on his recent Mideast trip, but in the context of his own feelings and passions about Jewish reactions?

Cardinal O'Connor did not dismiss the Jewish community in anger for its precipitous attack on him, nor did he abandon the dialogue as certain heated comments from him might have suggested. In fact, the Cardinal exhibited the pain of friendship. He reached out to the Jewish community to discuss his position, and then continued to move forward as a friend of the Jewish community.

Perhaps the best way to reflect on the value and significance of dialogue is not through abstract philosophy but through practical and personal experience. Today, I supervise a team of theological experts who work closely with leaders of the Christian community to change Christian liturgy and education to reverse the negative impact of two thousand years of hostile teachings. Before assuming this position, I served as the regional director of the Anti-Defamation League's (ADL) Southwest Office in Houston for eleven years. In that capacity I engaged in what Howard Singer refers to as those superficial exchanges of niceties. I have no deep theological background, but the facts of those eleven years speak for themselves.

When I first arrived in Houston, there was a total of six Christians who had an active interest in the well-being of the Jewish community. Whether the issue was anti-Semitism, Israel, or Soviet Jewry, we would consistently see the same six individuals. . . . They would show up at Jewish rallies and speak out in condemnation of terrorism and anti-Semitism. The Jewish community would find itself continually going back to the same well. . . .

By the end of the eleven years we could bring together hundreds of non-Jews to participate in issues of concern to the Jewish community. These were not just people with whom we exchanged ideas, but active partners in the pursuit of resolutions to issues. This didn't happen overnight, but was the product of years of education and communication. Progress was incremental—so slow that at times it seemed nonexistent. Nonetheless, the growth from six voices to hundreds speaks for itself. And this process has been repeated in hundreds of communities throughout the country.

Things are changing. The Latin American church through its umbrella organization of bishops—CELAM—has actively worked with the ADL to change the teachings of the Church in Latin America, a continent where the Church wields great secular as well as ecclesiastical power. Progress? Years ago the line between medieval and contempo-

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rary precepts about Jews was nonexistent.

A major Catholic textbook corporation has just published (with an imprimatur) guidelines—under the title *Within Context*—for Catholic educators on how to present Jews and Judaism when teaching the New Testament. *Within Context* is the work of a group of Catholic educators, New Testament scholars, and publishers called together by the Secretariat of Catholic-Jewish Relations of the National Conference of Catholic Bishops and the ADL's Interfaith Affairs Department. The document, which will be sent to every Catholic school and education office in the country, is an important practical step in the implementation and institutionalization of Vatican statements. Next year, the second part of *Within Context* will be published—a series of twelve specific lesson plans also developed with the cooperation of the ADL.

And the program continues. It is only a beginning. But even if progress is painstakingly slow, and I for one am not convinced that it is, it is nonetheless better than standing still and abandoning the dialogue.

TOM NEUMANN
Director
Intergroup Relations
Anti-Defamation League of
B'nai B'rith
New York City

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

When my old teachers at the Jewish Theological Seminary wanted to dismiss an analysis of a historical situation as lacking in learning and insight, they would call it "journalism." Although I myself do not always use this term in that pejorative sense, it came to mind when reading Howard Singer's article in the May issue. In its shallowness and cynicism Mr. Singer's piece is journalism. It seems to be an attempt to poison a serious enterprise in which many serious and intelligent people have been engaged and will continue to be engaged.

Like most journalists, Mr. Singer seems to see any historical situation as the outcome of a power struggle between easily recognized and characterized parties. In the case of Jewish-Christian dialogue, the struggle for him is essentially about guilt. Jews have been misunderstood and mistreated by Christians for centuries. Some Christians are now aware of their past sins. Some Jews have used the occasion of Christian guilt after the Holocaust to "express their grievances." However, Mr. Singer portrays "Jewish interfaith activists" as basically obsequious fools who have been used by Christians who want to alleviate their guilt cheaply without having to come to grips with the renewal of Jewish sovereignty in Israel.

As one who has been involved for almost twenty-five years in dialogue with Christians on the theological level (and who does not make a living from it), I can testify that Mr. Singer simply has no idea of what the meaning of that dialogue is. It is not about guilt. It has been, rather, about how two related faith communities—or any faith community—can survive in a secular world where many regard any faith as irrelevant if not actually countercultural. It stands to reason, then, that considering the historical affinities between Judaism and Christianity, some thoughtful and learned members of each respective community would be seeking each other out in their new common situation. Jews and Christians now have the common dilemma of "How do we sing the Lord's song in a strange land?" (Psalms 137:4). This is the essential point Howard Singer has missed because, it seems to me, he is only capable of describing news events, but not the greater subtleties of either history or theology.

[Rabbi] DAVID NOVAK
Jewish Theological Seminary
New York City

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

In "The Rise and Fall of Interfaith Dialogue" Howard Singer . . . is attacking a sacred cow—the belief that communication leads to understanding—and I am confident that he will receive his share of criticism, . . . particularly from those who lead, or are members of, various roundtables.

Unfortunately, Mr. Singer is all too observant and perceptive. His insights, while regrettable, are on the mark and he is to be commended for speaking out. . . .

BERL FALBAUM
West Bloomfield, Michigan

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

Congratulations to Howard Singer who . . . had the courage to announce that the emperor isn't wearing any clothes.

Around the time the May issue of COMMENTARY arrived, one of the major Jewish interfaith organizations in Chicago co-sponsored an interfaith seder using a "haggadah" written by personnel from the Catholic archdiocese; another Jewish interfaith group joined with Christians to sponsor a *Yom Hashoah* (Holocaust Remembrance Day) in a Chicago church where special notice was taken of those "other forgotten victims of the Holocaust," the five million other civilians killed during World War II; and of course the Pope, amidst great publicity, began the process of making a Jewish-born nun a saint. And so on and on.

Mr. Singer described the dialogue as between participants who are both deaf—neither side hearing the other. This presumes a rough equality, a shared interest. But the parties involved here are not equal: the Jews are handicapped in this dialogue for they are the ones who are desperately seeking an audience in much the same way a condemned peasant seeks a meeting with the king. You can take some Jews out of the ghetto but apparently you can't take the ghetto attitude out of some Jews.

As Mr. Singer noted, many of the most fervent Jewish supporters of interfaith relations are those who have remodeled Judaism to resemble Christianity. Is there perhaps a correlation between these attitudes? Do the advocates suffer from some version of the "Stockholm syndrome" in so identifying with Christianity that they must beg for its approval at any cost? An artificiality permeates interfaith relations, for Jews can't and don't ask hard questions about the nature of Christianity and its beliefs about Jews . . . and about Christian responsibility for two thousand years of bloodshed and brutality against Jews.

Ironically, the most successful gatherings of Jews and Christians have occurred outside of interfaith channels in discussing and working on such areas of mutual concern as obtaining federal funds for their respective schools, . . . activities usually condemned by Jewish interfaith organizations. The minuscule benefits from interfaith dialogue do not offset the loss of Jewish integrity, the pathetic groveling and the (dis)illusion that accompanies it. . . .

ETHEL C. FENIG
Chicago, Illinois

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TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

Howard Singer's article was remarkable in its prescience—the events of late June at the Vatican give irrefutable proof of his thesis. . . . Both Mr. Singer's article and the Pope's recent meeting with Kurt Waldheim reminded me of events of a generation ago.

In 1943 Ernst von Weizsäcker, the German Ambassador to the Holy See, wrote to the German Foreign Office as follows:

> The Pope, although reportedly beseeched by various sides, has not allowed himself to be drawn into any demonstrative statement against the deportation of the Jews of Rome. Even though he has to calculate that this attitude will be held against him by our opponents and taken advantage of by Protestant circles in Anglo-Saxon countries for propagandistic purposes against Catholicism, he has also in this touchy matter done everything in order not to burden relations with the German government and German agencies in Rome.

It is noteworthy that very few words in this letter would need to be changed to fit the current circumstance. The sad thing is that neither the Pope nor the Vatican bureaucracy understands what they have done in opening old wounds and creating new ones. . . .

HAROLD BERNARD REISMAN
Weston, Connecticut

HOWARD SINGER writes:

Several correspondents assume that I set out to belittle interfaith dialogue and that I must be opposed to it in principle. Not so. But because proponents of dialogue know that their hearts are pure and their goal of mutually respectful group relationships is supremely desirable, objective reporting (that is, anything short of wide-eyed admiration) strikes them as unwarranted hostility.

Proponents of dialogue prefer that the movement be pictured as making slow but steady progress. Instead, I wrote that interfaith dialogue exhibited violent oscillations, and I charted those paroxysms from the start of dialogue in the late 40's to Cardinal O'Connor's recent trip to Israel in the late 80's. My article was published in May; in mid-June the visit of Kurt Waldheim to the Vatican provoked a furious response from the Jewish organizations most active in dialogue. That visit, now the latest example of the pattern I described, provided swift and clear validation of my article's thesis.

Dialogue activists would have us judge their accomplishments by the numbers of interfaith services held and revised textbooks distributed. But others judge dialogue by its impact on the larger issues and events of the contemporary world. It is now inevitable that Jews will contrast the Vatican's willingness to treat with Kurt Waldheim, a man deeply stained by his war background, with its unwillingness to deal with Israeli leaders in an official capacity. That contrast makes the accomplishments of dialogue (as measured by proponents) seem trivial. An article on dialogue must point that out.

Several correspondents suggest that I believe the Catholic Church is anti-Semitic. Edward Orlando, Jr., for instance, scolds me gently for arguing that anti-Semitism is "a veritable article of faith" for Catholics. Again, not so. I am fully aware of the lengths to which the Catholic Church has gone to repudiate the old charge of deicide, for example. My point was that Christians (Protestants as well as Catholics) ought to examine the evidence that despite formal disavowals of anti-Semitism, comparatively little appears to have changed in practice. For the most recent illustration, we may turn to the Presbyterians.

At their annual meeting in June of this year, the nation's largest Presbyterian denomination rejected a statement on the Jews that was the fruit of four years of interfaith effort. The document's opponents clung to the old Christian belief that God's covenant with the Jews no longer existed because the "Old Testament" was "fulfilled" in the New Testament. All the old attitudes were expressed vigorously during the debates. In the end, the group compromised. They accepted a modified version of the document "for study." They affirmed that Jews have an existing covenant with God, but also asserted that while they should not "force" their views upon Jews, Presbyterians are free to try and convert them. If some of the more extreme statements were not themselves anti-Jewish in tone, they provided a possible foundation for the real thing. Yet Presbyterians have done their share of denouncing anti-Semitism with formal declarations in solemn assemblies.

Old attitudes persist despite formal disavowals because Christians still have to explain the awkward "role" of Jews (unlike Muslims or Chinese) in the Christian theological system. The Christian conception of the Jewish role has usually been a misfortune to Jews, although recently it has developed a favorable side. To offer a benevolent illustration, contemporary Protestant "dispensationalists" tend to be supporters of Israel at least in part because they expect Jesus to return to earth some time after the Jews return to Israel.

Several correspondents point with pride to their accomplishments in dialogue but forestall close examination of those accomplishments. Eugene Fisher, Tom Neumann, and Alvin Samuels remind us that dialogue is still in its "infancy." "It is only a beginning." "Progess is painstakingly slow." Mr. Samuels goes further and presents dialogue as an act of faith, an effort to achieve "the Kingdom of God on Earth." When the proposition is presented that way (as a messianic hope) I too can shift from analysis to reverence and whisper amen.

But it should be understood that in the short term, it is naive to expect substantive political and social changes as a result of dialogue, and self-defeating to press for them. Those most committed to improving interfaith relations will find themselves least likely to be in policy-making organizational positions. For in any organization, the people who identify most closely with the organization's interests are the ones who rise to the top. But Christian-Jewish dialogue is not the central concern of any major organization. Consequently those who make it their highest priority end up in the lowest echelons. (The Presbyterians at their recent meeting found that those committed to advancing Presbyterian missions in the Middle East were far more influential than those interested in better Jewish relations.) That's why those "oscillations" I described occur; when the tail fails to wag the dog, the hopeful outsiders who have been expecting it become bitter.

So much for common themes.

THE most disturbing accusation Mr. Fisher makes in his letter is that I "invented" the statement that Judaism was "superseded" and attributed it to *Nostra Aetate*, the

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The Institute for Polish-Jewish Studies at Oxford, and its US wing the American Foundation for Polish-Jewish Studies in Boston, Chicago, New York and Miami, both of which emerged out of the International Conference on Polish-Jewish Studies held at Oxford in September 1984, were established to:

- preserve the unique heritage of Polish Jewry;
- foster research into the history and culture of Polish Jewry on an interdisciplinary and international basis;
- make the results of this research available to the public by means of lectures, seminars, conferences, publications and documentary films;
- focus the attention of the European and American public and especially of Jewish and Polish communities in the West on what is most significant and precious in the legacy of Polish Jewry.

To achieve these goals the Institute has set up an International year book, POLIN: A Journal of Polish-Jewish Studies (Blackwells, Volume 1, Autumn 1986).

Other activities undertaken by the Oxford Institute and the American Foundation include:

- the British première of Claude Lanzmann's 'Shoah' at Oxford, followed by an international conference on the Holocaust, attended by scholars from America and Europe, including Israel and Poland (September 1985);
- a book on the history and culture of Polish Jews, entitled *The Jews in Poland*, based on the proceedings of the 1984 Oxford conference (Blackwells, 1986);
- providing scholars from Israel, Poland, Hungary and elsewhere with facilities enabling them to come to Oxford to study Polish-Jewish topics (in association with St. Anne's College, Oxford);
- grants to students and scholars from the Jagiellonian University, Cracow, to study in Israel and vice-versa (in association with the Hebrew University of Jerusalem);
- the annual Emmanuel Ringleblum Memorial Lectures at Oxford devoted to Holocaust studies;
- collecting funds to aid the work of the Citizens Committee for the protection of Jewish Cemeteries and Cultural Monuments in Poland;
- co-organizing with the Hebrew University of Jerusalem and Yad Vashem an international conference on Polish Jewish Studies, planned to take place in Jerusalem in 1988;
- organizing and sponsoring the Arthur Rubinstein Centenary Celebration in the Royal Festival Hall, London, on Sunday 25th January 1987 in the presence of HRH The Princess of Wales.

We appeal to you to contribute generously so that these important and valuable activities can continue. The American Foundation for Polish-Jewish Studies is registered as a non-profit corporation and all contributions are fully tax deductible.

The aim of the Institute and the Foundation is to establish an endowment of $1 to 1·5 million. This will enable them to spend $100,000 per year on their activities. In this context, it should be stressed that the Foundation cannot raise an endowment on this scale without significant contributions of 'seed money'.

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document that emerged from Vatican II. I quoted the *Nostra Aetate* document at considerable length and then went on to describe how it was perceived by Jews. The context follows:

> . . . The document stated that "the spiritual patrimony common to Christians and Jews . . . is great" but "Jerusalem did not recognize the time of her visitation . . . " and that " . . . authorities of the Jews and those who followed their lead pressed for the death of Christ." The paragraphs concerning Jews ended by declaring that with the arrival of Jesus, the "cross of Christ" became "the fountain from which every grace flows."
>
> While exonerating Jews of guilt for the crucifixion, the document . . . implied that Judaism had been superseded, that after Jesus the Jewish people were superfluous in God's salvational plan. . . .

The word "implied" makes it clear that I was not quoting the document *there,* but reporting on how people interpreted it. And well they might. How else could one understand the closing phrases about the cross of Christ becoming the fountain from which every grace flows? *Every* grace? Where does that leave Judaism? Does not that imply that the older faith has been superseded? And since that idea had been Christian doctrine for the past 1,900 years, was it not reasonable to interpret it as they did? In any event, that is what people understood it to mean, that is what I reported, and that is why the Church found it necessary to issue two clarifications nine and twenty years later.

Moreover, the passages Mr. Fisher quotes do not necessarily mean that Judaism was not superseded, as he says they do. To write that Israel has continued to bear witness to its fidelity to the one God is not the same as saying that it is a suitable and proper witness. To say that the permanence of Israel is a fact to be interpreted within God's design does not mean that it carries God's approval; sin, too, exists within the general frame of God's design. Poetic language permits great ambiguity. Let readers compare it with the prosy but utterly unmistakable language of the declaration on the Jews issued last July by the United Church of Christ: "We pray for divine grace that will enable us, more firmly than ever before, to turn from this path of rejection and persecution; to affirm that Judaism has not been superseded by Christianity; that Christianity is not to be understood as the successor religion to Judaism. . . ." The Catholic Church resorts to ambiguous language partly because it faces a theological dilemma. If the Church is the One True Church and the cross of Christ the only source of salvation, then in some sense Judaism has been superseded. But if Judaism has not been superseded, then Judaism in some sense has always been a, if not the, true faith. There is no way out of this dilemma theoretically, other than to say that the continued existence of the "two covenants" is "a mystery." The practical solution is to hang on to both "truths," ignoring the logical consequences of either, using the vaguest possible language to placate all parties, and when things go too far in any direction, coming out with a new guideline to explain what was really meant all along.

A splendid example of such retroactive repair is the 1974 Statement on Catholic-Jewish Relations quoted by Mr. Fisher. It insists that the earlier Vatican Council document (issued in 1965) did not really "pardon" the Jews for killing Jesus (the popular and deeply resented understanding) because the original statement actually meant that they were never guilty. Nevertheless, that is not what *Nostra Aetate* actually seemed to say in sentences such as " . . . Authorities of the Jews . . . pressed for the death of Christ." One wishes that humane results could be attained more directly, with less pretense (although however deviously and belatedly they are arrived at, they should nevertheless be welcomed).

I did not "denounce" dialogue twenty years ago, as Mr. Fisher claimed. I merely pointed out that of all the subjects possible in dialogue, theology was least likely to lead to fruitful results. I did not "rely" on Rabbi Soloveitchik's statements for support but merely reported them; I am not and never have been an Orthodox Jew.

Like many other Christians, W.T. Tête insists that the image of Jesus is the "bridge" between Judaism and Christianity. But as soon as we examine that proposition, the single image dissolves into two images in conflict with each other: Jesus the Jewish man and Jesus the Christian man-God whose arrival tears the fabric of history in two. And there is no meeting between them. We are left with a bridge that has two ends but no connecting middle, and it is sheer sentimentality to pretend otherwise.

Mr. Tête is absolutely correct in saying that "dialogue can promote the correction of the correctable." That's precisely why I am not against it in principle (though I have much to criticize in practice). But that is also why dialogue cannot be based on trying to find common theological ground. Such "common ground" can only be "found" by subtly falsifying one or both faiths. Moreover, theology is more likely to bewilder and alienate people with different beliefs than to encourage better relations. Martin Buber, who created and shaped the concept of dialogue, believed people of different faiths ought to encounter one another on the ground of their common humanity, not from within but only after transcending their respective theologies. For Buber, theology was a prison; true dialogue, a meeting of the liberated outside its walls.

Martin Buber's remark that Jews know Jesus in a way that remains inaccessible to Christians proves my point, not Mr. Tête's. Buber said it in order to have done, once and for all, with Christians challenging him to consider the image of Jesus as a reason for converting. His response meant that since Jews understood Jesus the man better than Christians possibly can, Jews have no need of Jesus the man-God.

I am astonished at Mr. Tête's suggestion that the assignment of some responsibility for the Holocaust to Christians is no more than a charge of "existential complicity," comparable to the old Christian charge that all Jews are responsible for the death of Jesus. Since he is committed to dialogue, I recommend that he read the book Mr. Samuels regards as one of the fruits of dialogue: Father Edward J. Flannery's *The Anguish of the Jews.* Or, even better, Raul Hilberg's early chapters in *The Destruction of the European Jews.* I accept Mr. Tête's comment that neither Christians nor Jews should engage in "polemical fratricide," but of course I see my article as analysis, not defamation. True dialogue, Buber wrote, can only occur when participants drop their masks, open their hearts, and speak their minds.

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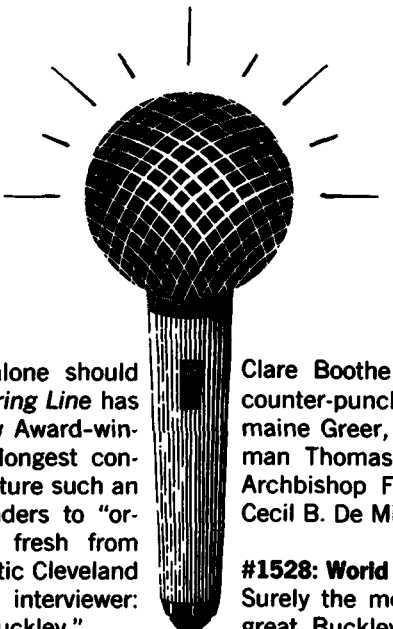

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To Father Conneally: I am not "afraid" of dialogue being used for conversion. Moreover, I am aware that von Balthasar and others (most notably, Reinhold Niehbuhr) have doubted that Jews should be singled out as targets for conversion. But on this issue the churches on the whole have refused to follow the lead of a minority of scholars and theologians. Missionary activity, even if pursued at a symbolic level, reveals that the notion that Judaism has been superseded is still alive and well in most branches of Christianity. Perhaps Father Conneally ought to introduce von Balthasar's writings to the people on the American Board of Missions to the Jews.

Mr. Neumann scolds me for mentioning Charles Coughlin and Gerald L.K. Smith in my brief survey of the background for present-day dialogue. Had I not done so, no doubt he would have pointed to those same figures as examples of how far we have come.

Rabbi David Novak would protect dialogue from examination by elevating it to the status of an esoteric process. He says he engages in dialogue "on the theological level," where participants deal with the "greater subtleties of . . . history and theology," far beyond anything ordinary mortals can comprehend. At this exalted level, interfaith dialogue consists of the search by religious people of all faiths for a way to "survive in a secular world."

Despite its portentous tone, under examination Rabbi Novak's vision of dialogue emerges as vacuous. For once having declared their common discomfort with the secular culture, what exactly are the participants to do? Presumably they unite to confront "secularism" at those meetings. To prove his point, Rabbi Novak would only have had to list a series of conferences at which participants of all faiths joined to consider, say, abortion laws, clearly among the most obvious consequences of our society's secular outlook. Or if he is engaged only in contemplating the eternal verities, Rabbi Novak might at least have cited a single interfaith conference that had as its theme the confrontation of religion and secularism. Readers may draw their conclusions from his failure to do so.

If the discontent which secularism evokes in religious people is the subject of dialogue, how is it, then, that those most opposed to secularism, Orthodox Jews and Christian Fundamentalists, rarely if ever attend interfaith conferences? Rabbi Novak, who seems unable to distinguish between argument and abuse, ought to explain how it is that secular Jewish organizations dominate interfaith conferences. That they do so is common knowledge; that these organizations actually regard their interfaith activity as being in the realm of social action is clear both from Mr. Fisher and Mr. Neumann. Readers should also find Mr. Neumann's letter instructive on the relative positions of the secular and the theological in current efforts at dialogue. Thus, Mr. Neumann admits that as a Jewish layman he has "no deep theological background" (which translates into the colloquial "I don't know a damn thing about religion") but "I supervise a team of theological experts. . . . "

Mr. Samuels offers numerous examples of what he regards as the current accomplishments of dialogue. Even if I were to take them at the value he assigns, he concedes they do not yet exert a broadly effective influence in society, or even within the churches. Moreover, as Ethel C. Fenig correctly points out, a subtle falsification and "blurring" does creep into such phenomena as interfaith services. I did not touch upon that and many other related problems in my article only because I wanted to stay with my main theme. My warm thanks to Berl Falbaum, Miss Fenig, and Harold Bernard Reisman for their supportive letters.

Street People

To the Editor of Commentary:

Paul S. Appelbaum's generally accurate and sensible account of the current plight of many homeless mentally-disordered persons is unfortunately marred by unrealistic recommendations and by a serious rhetorical lapse that underscores why his recommendations are misguided ["Crazy in the Streets," May].

Dr. Appelbaum correctly notes that deinstitutionalization has led to the release of large numbers of persons from locked state mental hospitals into communities that have been unwilling or unable to provide decent medical and social services to those who were formerly hospitalized. Consequently, many released persons now are homeless, leading lives of misery and degradation. After decrying simple, "unitary" solutions to complicated problems, Dr. Appelbaum then recommends, *inter alia*, the expansion of beds in state facilities and greater authority for the state to detain and treat *nondangerous* severely mentally disordered persons.

The difficulty with Dr. Appelbaum's recommendation . . . is that states and local communities will not spend the resources necessary for adequate care and treatment of expanded numbers of inmates in expensive state hospitals. Deinstitutionalization was motivated largely by the recognition that locked state hospitals have minimal therapeutic potential and are often degrading and cruel institutions that warehouse inmates under indecent conditions. There are at present insufficient resources to provide adequate drug therapy, the most efficient form of treatment for the severely disordered. More important for public policy, current hospitalization regimes cannot provide crucial rehabilitation for the large number of persons who primarily need these services. Drugs may reduce crazy thinking, agitation, and the like, but they cannot teach persons to hold jobs, to manage a budget, or to achieve the myriad other social skills necessary for independent living. And even if we possessed the necessary technology to help severely and chronically disordered persons accomplish the goals that would justify involuntary hospitalization, applying it to more than a tiny fraction of those who need it would cost far more than we are willing to pay. If our society was and is unwilling to provide reasonable resources for decent treatment in the hospitals (or in the community), it is naive to believe that we will now spend enough for expanded and thus even more expensive state hospitals. . . .

Dr. Appelbaum does not and cannot provide convincing evidence that "reinstitutionalization" will in fact provide humane care and a reasonable chance for an autonomous life to the severely disordered. We will simply trade publicly visible degradation and misery in the community for invisible degradation and misery in understaffed, neglectful total institutions. Indeed, a published study of the result of reinstitutionalization in Washington, a state which has

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adopted a law consonant with Dr. Appelbaum's proposal, found that the state hospitals are once again overcrowded, adequate treatment is unavailable, substantial numbers of persons who had been able to live in the community without hospitalization are now committed for long periods of time, and, most ironically, there is insufficient room for patients who *voluntarily* seek help.

Deinstitutionalization has not worked because, as Dr. Appelbaum grudgingly admits, it has not been tried. The community resources and caring necessary to give it a chance have not been provided. He is right to note that community care is not a panacea; many needy people will not accept voluntary services or will not comply with prescribed outpatient treatment regimens. No solution will be perfect, however; some amount of misery and degradation is unavoidable because the problems of the severely chronically disordered are too large, complex, and difficult to solve, given current resources and technologies. But the appropriate response is renewed commitment to providing the best care possible in the community. The number of patients who can realistically be helped can be treated as effectively or more effectively in the community than in the hospital, and, contrary to Dr. Appelbaum's assertion, there are numerous studies demonstrating that community treatment is cheaper per capita than inpatient hospitalization. . . .

Finally, a brief but telling rhetorical flourish in the article provides a major clue to why our society always fails to care adequately for its poor mentally-disordered citizens. In discussing whether the choices and behavior of severely mentally disordered persons are autonomous, Dr. Appelbaum first poses then implies an affirmative answer to the following rhetorical question: "Or is their behavior rather to be understood on the level of a simple reflex—autonomous only in a strictly formal sense?" This is astonishing from a caring, mental-health professional. As Dr. Appelbaum surely knows, the choices and actions of mentally disordered persons may not be as rational and autonomous as the choices of those without disorder, but they are in no way equivalent to the unwilled movements of lower organisms or to the reflexive movements of parts of human bodies. Equating mentally-disordered persons with lower organisms dehumanizes and stigmatizes the mentally disordered. This equation reflects attitudes that explain much of our society's shameful treatment of the disordered.

Dr. Appelbaum and I agree that our society has failed miserably to fulfill its responsibilities to the poor mentally disordered, but the answer is not regressive recommitment to predictably dehumanizing and unsuccessful involuntary hospitalization that infringes on liberty and that will not redeem the promise of care and concern.

STEPHEN J. MORSE
University of Southern California
Los Angeles, California

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

Paul S. Appelbaum is right that "deinstitutionalization" of psychotics has been expensive. I presume he is also right when he says that no psychotherapeutic benefit attaches either to not being confined or to not being labeled crazy; the question is within his psychiatric competence. . . . Yet he overreaches himself . . . by attempting to outflank "the belief that . . . we have no right to deprive people of liberty . . . for their own benefit":

> This emphasis on individual autonomy . . . has come to mean that in making our choices, as long as we do not actively infringe on the prerogatives of others, we face no obligation to consider them or their needs. The result has been the creation of an atomistic community in which, relieved of our duty to care for others, we pursue our goals in disregard of the suffering that surrounds us. This lack of an obligation to care for others has been transmuted into an actual duty to ignore their suffering, lest we act in such a way as to limit their autonomy.

This passage simply does not describe the way things are. Virtually no one, religious or secular, denies a moral obligation "to consider [others] or their needs," or opposes a legal obligation to care for others through government expenditures. Such government expenditures, and substantial private charities, are very large facts. . . . Thus no one thinks it moral to "pursue our goals in disregard of the suffering that surrounds us," and the law is structured so that few would dare. Anyway, none of this bears on the question of coercive treatment.

Mr. Appelbaum comes distressingly close to saying that to oppose locking up psychotics is simply not to care enough. But wait, it gets worse. Not satisfied to say that autonomy is not always the highest good, he tries to show that being locked up is not necessarily a loss of autonomy. "Can the choices [psychotics] make, limited as they are to the selection of a doorway for the day, be called a significant embodiment of human autonomy?"

Yes, they can. The street psychotic can get away from you, doctor. He can get away from lobotomies, shocks, needles, "insight therapy," or whatever other treatment is fashionable just now. He can get away from the corporal discipline of the wards. He can get away from the concentrated company of other (possibly incompatible) psychotics, not to mention the staff. He can get away from enforced conformity to a hostile belief system. If you don't think these are important liberties, ask someone who has gone without them.

Such autonomy is not always the highest good, but it is a good. Whoever would take it from another may reasonably be regarded by the latter as malevolent, however benevolent he may feel. . . .

The argument that the countervailing value of therapy *is a more real freedom* than physical autonomy requires a radical redefinition of "freedom" . . . diametrically opposed to the commonsense notion of the word "free."

Actually, Dr. Appelbaum likes autonomy. For him, deinstitutionalization went wrong when "individual discretion in the release of patients was overridden by [judicial], legislative, and administrative fiat." But the individual whose discretion was so disturbingly overridden was neither the psychotic nor the psychotic's next-of-kin, but the psychiatrist. . . .

ROBERTO ALAZAR
Westchester, California

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

Paul S. Appelbaum wants greater authority to detain and treat the mentally ill. Apparently on the strength of his signature he wants forcibly to detain and administer thorazine and other neuroleptic drugs which he considers to be "a genuinely effective medication." He would detain and treat the mentally ill even when they were no longer a danger to themselves or to others.

Dr. Appelbaum's distressing portrait of the mentally ill in the streets pales before the even more

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distressing description of the effects of neuroleptic drugs. In his article, "Law and Anti-Psychotic Medications" (*Behavioral Sciences and the Law*, Summer 1986), Alexander D. Brooks summarizes the findings of the professional medical literature:

> Side effects are physical, emotional, cognitive, and social in nature. The physical consequences of the medications range in a spectrum literally from dryness of mouth to death. One common side effect is akathisia, a condition marked by an irresistible physical restlessness which causes the patient to engage in interminable pacing. His arms, legs, and feet shake. The patient is often seized by panic or intense anxiety. . . .
>
> Another side effect is akinesia, which is characterized by sleepiness and drowsiness. Patients report that they feel lifeless, like zombies. . . . Many of these patients feel they are "sleeping their lives away." They are listless and apathetic. Their lives are empty, aimless, and unenthusiastic. Life hardly seems worth living. . . .
>
> Cognitive side effects include an inability to read, concentrate, or even speak clearly. These side effects cause many mental patients to withdraw into an intellectual vacuum.
>
> Adverse social consequences are common. Because so many patients are sad, morose, hopeless, and gloomy, it is difficult for them to enjoy adequate social relationships, even with fellow patients, let alone with "normals" in the community. . . .
>
> These side effects, grave as they are, pale in significance, however, when compared with tardive dyskinesia, a physical disablement manifested by grotesque movements of the face, tongue, mouth, and limbs. These bizarre and uncontrollable movements are dysfunctional and humiliating.
>
> The most distressing aspect of tardive dyskinesia is that for many long-term medication users the condition is irreversible and discovered only when it has become severely disabling. Unlike other side effects which disappear when medication is discontinued, tardive dyskinesia remains. There is no known cure for it, although cases of apparent spontaneous remission have been reported. . . .

Expert psychiatric opinion has conservatively estimated that 27 percent of drug-treated patients have tardive dyskinesia; the ACLU estimates that this disorder affects 40 percent of the patients.

Under current state court decisions (the *Rogers* and *Rennie* cases) mental patients are allowed to refuse medication if they can demonstrate sufficient judgment in a court. The limitations of the power of the psychiatric profession to medicate, which Dr. Appelbaum deplores, have come about not because of the civil-rights movement, Thomas Szasz, or the late Erving Goffman, but because of the hard evidence of the detrimental effects of the drugs.

I find especially reprehensible the refusal of the psychiatric profession to accept legal responsibility for the damage it does in administering drugs to unwilling patients.

It is clear that Dr. Appelbaum does not agree with Hippocrates that the mentally disturbed should have the rights of any other citizen —but can he overlook that part of the Hippocratic oath which enjoins him not to harm if he cannot help?

LOUIS HEITNER
Larchmont, New York

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

Paul S. Appelbaum has made a real contribution to the burgeoning debate over "deinstitutionalization" for, so far as I know, no other paper has appeared in the lay press which has treated this awful problem for what it is: a monumental, preordained failure. The *American Journal of Social Psychiatry*, in the summer of 1985, devoted the entire issue to a critique of deinstitutionalization, and Dr. Alexander Gralnick, who edited the issue, was as forthright as Dr. Appelbaum. The American Psychiatric Association, on the other hand, after years of study, in 1986 stated that "the concept of deinstitutionalization, per se, was not bad. It was clinically sound and economically feasible." This preposterous conclusion is a reflection, I believe, of the uncritical investment of psychiatry in the deinstitutionalization movement.This has extended from 1954 to the present, a full professional lifetime, and it is understandably difficult for those who have devoted their whole professional life to this movement to consider that it was, in the words of Dr. Gralnick, "a failing effort which should be abandoned."

Nevertheless, it seems to me that Dr. Appelbaum has not really succeeded in the task which he sets for himself: to understand the forces which created the deinstitutionalization debacle. One would think from reading his article that the driving force behind the movement (at least in its inception, and until the mid 1960's) was a "pragmatic innovation, the conviction that some patients could be treated in the community." This was buttressed by the advent of medications which seemed, to some, to hold the promise of eliminating the need for hospitalization.

Yet nowhere does Dr. Appelbaum mention the worldwide scope of the deinstitutionalization movement, which implies that it was something other than a pragmatic response on the part of American psychiatry to those social circumstances in America which were (and are) used to rationalize it.

It would be closer to the truth to say that we are losing the clarity of distinctions between what is permissible and what is not, not only in the ethical sense of the distinction between good and bad, but in our very perception of reality. We do not want to pass judgment on craziness, just as we do not want to condemn pornography, abortion, incest, adultery, etc. . . .

I agree with Dr. Appelbaum that deinstitutionalization has been a tragedy, but I do not agree that it would not be difficult to restore some sense to the care of the mentally ill. The most pervasive and profound idea of the last three hundred years is that everything is permitted, and this includes being crazy. . . .

In truth, we not only do not wish to deal with the crazies, as Dr. Appelbaum asserts, we do not even want to make the distinctions which would enable us to do so.

HAL J. BREEN, M.D.
Phoenix, Arizona

PAUL S. APPELBAUM writes:

The letters of Stephen J. Morse, Roberto Alazar, and Louis Heitner demonstrate the difficulty of seeking reasonable solutions to the problems of caring for the mentally ill. I argued in my article that the failure of deinstitutionalization inhered in the ideological passions of its advocates, who refused to consider the mentally ill as individuals with unique needs. Instead, they insisted on a unitary approach to all mentally-ill persons: discharge from the hospital at any cost.

A more reasonable approach, I suggested, would include "moderate expansion of beds in state facilities, especially for the most severely ill patients; good commun-

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ity-based services for those patients —and their number is not small— who could prosper outside of an institution with proper supports; and greater authority for the state to detain and treat the severely mentally ill for their own benefit. . . ."

Is this a call for "reinstitutionalization," "enforced conformity to a hostile belief system," or indiscriminate use of psychotropic medications? Of course not. It is a plea for recognition of the fact that attempts to force all patients to subsist on their own in the community may render them "free" and "autonomous" only at the price of leaving them unfed, unwashed, and incoherent.

The idea of hospitalization as one option for the treatment of mental illness, however, is more than some people can bear. Why this refusal to recognize the obvious? Mr. Morse falls back on practical justifications. He tells us that society has never been willing to pay for adequate care for the mentally ill and thus will not fund hospital care. But if monies will not be forthcoming, neither hospital-based nor community programs will survive. Are we to abandon all hope of offering decent care? Mr. Morse suggests that perhaps resources can be mustered for community care alone, since it is said to be more economical. Unfortunately, that frequently offered assertion is spurious. All studies to date that have estimated the relative costs of hospital and community-based care have excluded from the community sample those patients so difficult to manage that hospitalization seemed essential. That leaves us with the unsurprising conclusion that a selected sample of more cooperative patients can be cared for in the community at reasonable cost. It tells us nothing about the problematic population about which we are most concerned.

Alternatively, Mr. Morse argues that hospitals cannot provide needed rehabilitation, a contention belied by many innovative programs in facilities around the country.

Clearly there is a deeper basis than these weak assertions for this impassioned opposition to hospitalization as one component of a system of care for the mentally ill. That basis is apparent from Mr. Morse's and Mr. Alazar's extreme discomfort with my discussion of autonomy. Mr. Morse grows pious at the thought that a chronically mentally ill person, without treatment for severe psychosis, may make choices on a reflex level. Mr. Alazar demonstrates the point, however, in the guise of quarreling with it. The psychotic person he describes is engaged in simple, reflexive avoidance, not of psychiatric treatment, but of any engagement whatsoever with other human beings.

Does this mean that all persons with psychosis lack the capacity for meaningful choice? By no means. But if autonomy is conceived in Kant's sense of making choices in accord with internalized and universalizable moral principles, no one familiar with the effects of psychosis can doubt its power, in severe cases, to impair this function. A refusal to recognize this effect, based on an automatic preference for individual liberty, precludes the formulation of appropriate policy toward the severely mentally ill. It discourages the creation of options that are seen as restrictive of liberty, including hospitalization. Thus, it has the paradoxical effect of making inpatient treatment unavailable even for those patients who would choose to seek it. In addition, it contributes to a laissez-faire attitude toward the establishment of outpatient facilities, since mentally ill people are seen as having "chosen" to behave the way they do, and thus hardly deserving of the allocation of scarce resources for their care.

The issue of involuntary hospitalization is separate, but no less worthy of attention. Elsewhere Mr. Morse has written that "a commitment to human dignity and liberty requires that all persons be allowed to decide for themselves issues as important as psychiatric hospitalization and treatment, even if the reasons that they give seem crazy and not hospitalizing and treating them seems inhumane. This incompatibility between liberty and humaneness is unfortunately fundamental. . . ." I disagree. I believe we can act humanely by temporarily restricting mere liberty of movement to bring about freedom from distress and greater liberty of choice. Given the restorative effects of anti-psychotic medication on rational thought, those who are so enamored of autonomy that they cannot tolerate its limitation sacrifice in the end the very value they purport to cherish.

I suggested several reasons for the cultish status of autonomy. Hal J. Breen adds another: societal unwillingness to distinguish between permissible and impermissible behavior, a consequence of the breakdown of consensus as to acceptable moral standards. I would submit, however, that the actions about whose moral status we are uncertain are not those of the mentally ill, but rather our own. It is our confusion about the legitimacy of intervening in others' lives for *their* benefit (we rarely hesitate when it is for *our* benefit) that paralyzes policy in this area.

Finally, Mr. Heitner wants to fight yet another battle, that over the use of anti-psychotic medications. Suffice it to say that all medications present a range of side effects, with anti-psychotic medications not being particularly egregious offenders. As in all cases, the question to ask is whether the risk of side effects is worth the benefits the drugs may provide. The tens of thousands of persons who, having been the victims of an acute psychotic episode, choose to take these medications when restored to sanity, to prevent a recurrence of their illness, attest to the decidedly minority status of Mr. Heitner's views.

What Price Messianism?

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

Jacob Katz's article, "Is Messianism Good For the Jews?" [April], starts with a quotation from Gershom Scholem's *Sabbetai Zevi*: *The Mystical Messiah* indicating that Jews have paid a high price for their messianism. In his erudite essay, Mr. Katz, one of the most important scholars of Jewish social history, tells us his conception of this price: extreme quietism in the face of terrible sociopolitical conditions. . . . He also warns of the danger of the irrational wave of extremist messianism in Israel.

Messianism, however, also bears fruit, says Mr. Katz. The Zionist movement has benefited from it, for the obvious reason that, properly understood, "Jewish messianism [is] the longing for regained independence in one's own country." But "with the establishment in 1948 of the secular state of Israel, the messianic issue would seem to have lost all actual point." It was only "in the wake of the Six-Day War of 1967, in a dialectical turn of history, [that] there arose in

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Israel a new quasi-fundamentalist messianism." Mr. Katz is critical of this new movement, Gush Emunim, and reminds the Jewish people that they might have to pay a heavy price "for their lasting commitment to the messianic idea."

I cannot agree more with Mr. Katz's critique of the logic of messianism. I find it puzzling, however, that, in the face of his warning against messianism, Mr. Katz himself insists that it is a necessary part of present-day Zionism. But he fails to explicate his own support of messianism and, thereby, to comply with common standards of critical analysis. Let me illustrate.

Mr. Katz concedes that Jewish Zionist messianism has been associated not only with the hope for national freedom but also with "more far-reaching expectations of a religious, national, and social character." These expectations, he says, "were also attached to the hoped-for culmination of the historical process." Precisely which historical process he is referring to and what its hoped-for culmination is to be, are not clear. Is the historical process the preparation of a modern national homeland for the Jews? Is its culmination the establishment of the state of Israel?

Mr. Katz says that, historically, for the traditional Jew, "abandoning messianic belief would have meant rejecting Jewish ritual itself, the consequence of which would have been to drop out of the Jewish community." Has secular Zionist activity come to replace Jewish ritual for Mr. Katz? Is this why he claims that the proper response to fundamentalist messianism "cannot be a repudiation of the historical connection of Zionism with messianism"? Is this why he would not let go of messianism altogether? Or does he really believe in a messiah? If not, what is, in actual fact, his own brand of messianism? Why does he not discuss it explicitly and teach us about its possible price?

Mr. Katz claims that democracy and messianism ought to be jointly applied in Israel. But nationalist messianic goals—either religious or secular—are both anti-individualistic and utopian in nature and, therefore, . . . at times, compromise democratic liberal principles and the structure of the nation-state. Has the German experience five decades ago not taught us that much? Why, then, would Mr. Katz ignore his own question and refrain from applying it to his own case? Is his brand of messianism good for the Jews?

Nathaniel Laor
Yale University
New Haven, Connecticut

Jacob Katz writes:

Nathaniel Laor's letter contains a number of misreadings of my article which lead him to question my conception of the role messianism ought to play in the life of the state of Israel. Nowhere did I state that messianism "is a necessary part of present-day Zionism," nor did I claim "that democracy and messianism ought to be jointly applied in Israel." What I did insist upon—as Mr. Laor quotes in his letter—is that "the historical connection of Zionism with messianism" cannot be denied. This connection is evident in the commitment of all elements of the Zionist movement, in all their activities, to regaining national independence in the ancient homeland—the very core of messianism.

To negate this connection in order to counter the messianic claim of Gush Emunim or any other coterie is therefore a futile enterprise; it amounts to rewriting the history of Zionism for a dubious ideological benefit. The proper answer to such a claim is that no one sector of the population has the right to impose its particular—even idiosyncratic—version of messianism upon the state as a whole. That such versions of messianism do pop up in Israel's public life is no wonder, given the deep imprint messianic ideas and imaginings have left on the collective Jewish consciousness in the past. They cannot be uprooted, but their effect can be limited by granting them no more room or weight than is their democratic due. There can be no "joint application" of messianism and democracy, for the former must abide by the rules of the latter.

Mr. Laor asks about the brand of messianism to which I myself adhere. In answering his question I could follow the example of the late political philosopher Leo Strauss who once replied to a similar question by saying, "I'm just a poor historian who is not supposed to have any ideas of his own." Strauss of course had plenty of ideas and convictions of his own, but did not want to leave the impression that his personal views were compelling conclusions deriving from his historical insights. But though I think this attitude a commendable one for historians, I will nonetheless satisfy Mr. Laor's curiosity about the place of the state of Israel within my overall conception of Jewish messianism.

There is a prayer for Israel's welfare recited during the synagogue service which refers to the state of Israel as *"reshit geulatenu"*—the beginning of our redemption. Whenever I hear it I am inclined to change the wording to read *"helek mi-geulatenu"*—i.e., *a part* (albeit an important one) of our redemption. My reason is that to speak of a "beginning" in this connection suggests a belief that the state of Israel is no more than the commencement of a process which requires culmination. It is precisely this line of thinking which has led people to devise means of hastening the process of redemption and has thus contributed to the ideology of Gush Emunim. I do not need such a future-oriented dimension in order to value the Jewish state. Imperfect as it may be, I grant the state messianic status not because of some imaginary future but because of its historic roots.

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School of American Ballet student performance: Merrill Ashley, Gelsey Kirkland and Colleen Neary. Copyright: Martha Swope, 1967.

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How Eminent Physicists Have Lent Their Names to a Politicized Report on Strategic Defense

Angelo M. Codevilla

"PHYSICISTS Express 'Star Wars' Doubt; Long Delays Seen." This headline in the New York *Times* of April 25, 1987 heralded a 424-page *Report to the American Physical Society of the Study Group on Science and Technology of Directed Energy Weapons.* Over the following week the major media uncritically spread the message: the nation's senior physicists—the ones who have produced the marvels of modernity, the ones to whom we pay hefty tuitions for our children, the very ones who deal in symbols too complex for mere mortals—had risen above the partisan clamor over the Strategic Defense Initiative (SDI), had conducted an impartial study, and had concluded that all the talk of a serious defense against ballistic missiles was nonsense. The physicists' knowledge of the laws of nature and of the details of technology had dispassionately shown that well-nigh insuperable hurdles stand in the way of building devices that would meet present requirements for antimissile defense. Moreover, even if these requirements were ever met, the Soviets could easily make a few changes in their offensive forces and leave us worse off than before we started.

In fact, however, the American Physical Society (APS) report was not written by an impartial jury of qualified scientists. Although some of the physicists involved with the report have very distinguished records of scientific achievement, not a single one of them (not even Charles Townes of Berkeley, who shares credit for inventing the laser) has *ever* worked in the practical field of developing directed-energy weapons. Perhaps this helps explain why the report contains so many errors and internal contradictions (telling us in one place, for instance, that the engines of long-range missiles burn for between three and six minutes, while in another place assuming that they burn between two and three minutes). More importantly, the fact that the report was commissioned, written, and reviewed by people who, like Sidney Drell, Wolfgang Panowsky, and Herbert York, have spent much of their time during the past generation advocating the weaponry of Mutual Assured Destruction (MAD), and opposing the alternative represented by SDI, may also help to explain why it is a work of ideology masquerading as science—a political tool the purpose of which is to convince Americans not to try to acquire defensive weapons.

THE REPORT consists of a network of assumptions overlaid upon scientific filler materials. Its conclusions are predetermined by the interplay of the assumptions. Because these assumptions are either erroneous or arbitrarily tendentious, or both, the report as a whole offers a particularly striking illustration of the principle of garbage in, garbage out.

One major example is the notion that all warheads are created equal. Thus the report begins with this evaluation of the U.S.-Soviet balance in offensive missilery: " . . . the qualitative status of U.S. and Soviet ICBMs is similar. The Soviets are thought to have a slight lead in silo hardness, the U.S. is ahead in solid propellant technology and in accuracy." This makes as much sense as comparing rifles and shotguns by talking about the gunpowder they use. In fact, the Soviets have an overwhelming edge in the *combination* of warhead yield and warhead accuracy. That is why Soviet warheads can destroy America's vital military targets while American warheads cannot destroy the Soviet Union's vital military targets. The authors of the report, projecting upon the Soviets their own commitment to the MAD doctrine, refuse to understand that Soviet ICBMs are not meant to hurl indiscriminate destruc-

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tion at U.S. society at all costs, but rather are designed to perform a precise military task.

This willful blindness permits the authors to take as given that the Soviet Union, in order to counter U.S. missile defenses, would do things like divide missile payloads into great numbers of nuclear bomblets, and cause missile boosters to burn out within the atmosphere. But while such measures might conceivably increase the chance of getting some warheads through an American defensive system, they could only do so at a severe cost in yield, accuracy, and reliability with regard to any given target. They would thereby make it impossible for Soviet ICBMs to do the job for which they were built in the first place.

So pervasive is the tendency in the report to substitute its own assumptions for reality that when the words "if," "nominal," or "assuming" appear, one has to hold on to one's intellectual wallet. For instance:

> For a nominal hardness[6] of $10kj/cm^2$, at a range of 1000km, the brightness-time product needed is $10^{20}j/sr$. Assuming that the engagement time is .01 seconds (as noted in calculations that follow later in this chapter) a brightness of $10^{21}w/sr$ is required . . . If the mission requires a brightness of $10^{21}kw/sr$, a laser at [a wavelength of one micron] operating with 10m mirror will need to generate about 30 megawatts . . . at [three microns] 300 megawatts would be required.

English translation: If we assume, without argument, that the Soviet missiles to be killed by U.S. laser weapons are ten times "harder" (i.e., more resistant to lasers) than the hardest missile flying today and if we further assume, again arbitrarily, that we have only one-tenth of a second to make the kill, it then follows that in order to kill missiles the U.S. would have to put into space either a 30-megawatt laser operating at a wavelength of one micron, or a 300-megawatt laser operating at a wavelength of 3 microns. The U.S. does not now have the capacity to produce such lasers, and will not for the near future.

But if we were to say (as we could with much greater plausibility) that a full second is an acceptable time to allow for shooting down the real missiles in existence today, then one would have to conclude that a 10-megawatt space-based laser operating at a wavelength of 3 microns would do a good job of defending against missiles. The authors of the report know that *such* missile-killing lasers are very much within reach. But since they do not want the U.S. to develop a system of strategic defense, they weave a web of assumptions leading to the conclusion that the lasers we can build are not worth building, and that the ones worth building are not buildable.

In sum, the report's *modus operandi* is as follows: Show the near-impossibility of our performing technical feats that the report implies are essential to ballistic-missile defense, but that in fact are irrelevant or imaginary. Then use this to argue that more research must be done into how to meet an even stricter requirement. On the other hand, take it for granted that, on the Soviet side, the most astonishing technical feats—"ballistic" missiles that would cease to be ballistic and jig randomly in their trajectories, and warheads equipped with all-azimuth sensors—can easily be performed to evade any U.S. defensive system.

This *modus operandi* is neither science nor technology.

A good illustration of how the report deploys the second aspect of this technique is its treatment of the crucial question of missile vulnerability. Obviously the less vulnerable (or "harder") Soviet missiles are, the more effective must be the directed-energy weapons we design to counter them; and the more effective the weapons must be, the more difficult it will be to build them. Not surprisingly, therefore, the report devotes a good deal of time to creating the impression that the bodies of missiles are very tough, and can easily be made even more resistant. The truth, however, is that real missiles happen to be pretty flimsy things.

Indeed, at least since 1978, it has been known that the amount of on-target power needed by a laser to destroy missiles is not very great. Thus, whereas the materials out of which our own Minuteman and MX missiles are made will burn through after having received about 6,000 watts per square centimeter per second, tests have shown that when those missiles are under the heat and pressure of boost phase, they will stand less than one-sixth of that amount before they disintegrate. That ratio of one to six also holds for missiles made of aluminum—as are the overwhelming majority of Soviet ICBMs—except that the amount of on-target power needed to destroy aluminum missiles has proved to be much smaller (only between 80 and 160 watts per second per square centimeter).

One will find nothing of this in the APS report. The report gives no facts about how hard missiles are. Instead it gives the impression that they are very hard, and discusses various methods for making them even harder: coating missiles with laser-resistant materials; spinning the missiles to spread out the effects of laser beams; and making the missile engines work so fast that they burn out before leaving the atmosphere's protection.

Coating missiles is often touted as the simplest laser counter-measure. The problems, however, only begin with the weight of the coating. Lowell Wood of the Livermore Laboratory and Gregory Canavan of Los Alamos have pointed out that the report's distinguished authors made an elementary mistake by assuming that the weight of the coating to be placed on each stage of a missile would be proportionate to the *mass*

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of that stage rather than to its *surface area*. This leads the report to underestimate the weight of the coating, and therefore the number of warheads that the Soviets would have to take off their missiles to "pay" for the coating's weight. Thus, say Wood and Canavan:

> . . . if the Soviets put 6 metric tons of anti-laser shielding on an SS-18—which would represent about a half inch of shielding over the entire skin of the missile—the APS report states that the SS-18 could still carry 5 warheads out of its normal complement of 10. . . . The correct answer, however, is that it would have to take off a total payload mass equal to that of *all* of the 10 warheads.

To be sure, as Wood and Canavan concede, in removing warheads the Soviets would also remove fuel from the post-boost vehicle. This might make room for one or two warheads aboard the hardened SS-18. Yet even if it could be thus retrofitted, the SS-18, the key to any Soviet first strike, write Wood and Canavan, "would be reduced to something far less . . . by the mere existence of an American strategic defensive capability. . . . Any attrition of the attack by the operation of the defensive system would be an additional benefit."

But what about the prior question: could the shielding be applied? It just so happens that the materials that are best at resisting lasers—vitreous carbon compounds—are too brittle to take the stresses of a boosting missile. This fact receives veiled acknowledgment—but no more—in the report. Yet even if a good material were found, and the sheets were glued or bolted on, does anyone think that the skin of a missile that is designed barely to hold itself together could support tons of material hanging from its sides? This elementary question is one the report does not even mention, let alone address.

The report is similarly careless on the second counter-laser method—spinning missiles. Never mind that to spin a missile the engines would have to be modified and that the inertial guidance system would have to be redesigned to take into account the new forces acting upon it. But how would the missile's skin react to the centrifugal force—especially with heavy shielding hanging on? Given all of the forces already working upon the missile, would this new force push it over the edge? To what extent would the weakening caused by centrifugal force negate whatever spreading of the laser beams that the spinning would produce? The report says: "Rotation of missiles at angular rates of the order of 1 rps have been studied and shown to extract little or no penalty to the offense. It is likely that missile rotation can be accomplished on a retrofit basis." But no one has ever tried to retrofit a missile to rotate. Perhaps that is why the report gives no details of any such "study."

The third counter-laser method dealt with by the report—the mythical fast-burn booster—has been a hardy perennial of the anti-strategic defense crowd since 1982. That is because such boosters would have three advantages. First, a missile whose engines are not burning cannot be easily seen. Second, it is not under as much strain and hence is not so "soft" or vulnerable. And third, during the time when it is "softest," the atmosphere protects the missile to some extent from many lasers, and entirely from particle beams.

The report refers to studies by Lockheed and General Dynamics to the effect that no physical principle prevents the design of a rocket that reached sufficient speed in 60 to 100 seconds to send its payload to intercontinental range. Yet neither the U.S. nor, so far as we know, the Soviet Union has tried to build such rockets. The reason is that when a missile's engines cease burning before leaving the atmosphere behind, the missile cannot impart to its payload the precise thrust and direction it needs for accurate delivery—that is, to be a militarily rational weapon.

The report's authors were aware of this, but nonetheless wrote a strong endorsement of the fast-burn booster. The only explanation for the contradiction, other than professional irresponsibility, is that the authors discount military utility and that they value highly any factor, however small, that would favor the delivery of any kind of nuclear device at all.

JUST AS the report strives to create the impression that missiles can become vastly less vulnerable than they now are, or are likely to become, so it strives to convince us that the defensive laser technology we already have at hand is vastly less effective than it actually is.

The report's discussion of this subject begins with chemical lasers—the kind that everyone acknowledges are closest to being made into weapons. The "bottom line," stated in the report's Executive Summary, is that before this can happen chemical lasers must improve by a factor of 100. The text, however, does not argue this point directly. As we have seen, the issue is largely predetermined by the arbitrary initial assumption that missile boosters have a "nominal" hardness of 10,000 watts per square centimeter per second, and that kill times must be one-tenth of one second.

Most of the report's discussion of chemical lasers is textbook physical chemistry. It says nothing about how close we are or are not to a device of a given power. The last page-and-a-half deals with the engineering of chemical lasers, and is full of hints—but only hints—of unsurmounted or perhaps insurmountable practical problems. These hints add up to the suggestion that it would prove difficult to build a chemical laser much more powerful than the largest one we now have (2.2 megawatts). Yet in 1980-82 American aerospace companies were proposing to build 5- and 10-megawatt lasers. Moreover, the existence of a 5-megawatt laser was re-

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ported in Soviet publications as early as 1975! Rather than openly challenging the feasibility of a space-based chemical laser, then, the report raises vague and indistinct doubts.

Of course the question before us is whether or not the U.S. should actually build a 10-megawatt chemical laser and carry out the only really meaningful tests by shooting down missiles with it. This is a political question, not a technical one. And this is the decision that the report tries to influence by insinuating that the technical uncertainties are too great. Yet the truth is that technical uncertainty has not been a factor in this program for many years. Indeed, the chemical-laser program has been intentionally held back. One would never know from the report that the U.S. Defense Advanced Research Projects agency, *in 1980,* gave to the Carter administration and to the Congress the option of a program to test a prototype 5- or 10-megawatt chemical-laser weapon in space by the end of 1986.

The report also deals with other kinds of lasers that might be used to defend against missiles. Since no one contends that these other kinds of lasers are ready to be made into weapons, the report's task is merely to make them appear even farther away from feasibility than they are. But even here the report arbitrarily overstates, and once more by a huge margin, the requirements for effectiveness. For example, the Executive Summary says that one type of laser—the Excimer—must operate with a power of a billion watts in order to work as an effective weapon. Yet, figuring backward from the authors' own estimation of the power required to rupture a missile's skin, we discover that only some six million watts would be needed.

Similarly with another laser on which we are working—the free-electron type (F.E.L.). For the F.E.L., the report sets a power requirement wildly greater than its own criteria would actually call for. After reciting all of the real difficulties in the program—achieving high power with any degree of stability, getting mirrors to bear up under high power, short wavelength beams—the authors, not content with concluding that F.E.L.'s are not yet ready to become weapons, seem unable to resist the urge to drive a stake into the program's heart. So they write: "We estimate that for strategic defense applications, a ground-based free electron laser should produce an average power level of at least 1 Gw [billion watts] at 1 micron wavelength—." The report further assumes a 75-percent loss of power for ground-based lasers (due to relay mirror losses, as well as atmospheric scattering and absorption). But if the reader applies the figure from laser on-target power implied by these assumptions to the report's own "nominal hardness" for missiles, he cannot but conclude that such a 1-billion watt F.E.L. ground-based laser would still be between 25 and 100 times more powerful than necessary. Is there any reasonable explanation for such a high requirement? None.

Among the more pathetic of the report's sections is the one dealing with the task of recognizing and tracking missile boosters. The main message in this chapter is that it is well-nigh impossible to track missiles from space with sufficient accuracy, and that it is impossible to discriminate between the warheads and the decoys that these missiles would release if they were not destroyed.

The first part of this message is based on the postulate that in order for a space-based laser (or a mirror relaying a ground-based laser) to hit a missile with a diameter of 1 meter, the detection and tracking instruments, located in orbit 22,300 miles above the earth, must be able to locate with an accuracy of 1 meter or better "the absolute position in space" of every missile.

If one accepts that innocent-sounding premise, one will conclude along with the report that the job would require 40 meter-wide infra-red telescopes 22,300 miles above the earth, and one will gasp at the thought. To get around this enormity, the report proposes an even greater one: fully 6,000 dish-type microwave radars in low earth orbit.

But this is nonsense from beginning to end. If one were to give the job of precise tracking of missiles to the missile-killing laser stations themselves (operating perhaps 500 miles high) it would be wholly unnecessary for them to determine the missiles' absolute location in space. They would only have to determine the missiles' location *relative to themselves.*

Interestingly enough, the original space-based laser program took this common-sense approach back in 1979, and went on to develop the technology to do precisely this in a program called Talon Gold. With this approach the job of detecting and tracking devices from high altitudes would simply be to give each low-altitude station information sufficient for it to point its acquisition sensors within roughly ten degrees of its target. That kind of high-altitude tracking is very much within current technology. The report's approach amounts to looking for a very hard path when an easy one is evident, and then complaining about how hard the path is. Is this science?

The report's treatment of detecting and tracking post-boost vehicles (PBVs) is of the same kind. "Even if detection is feasible, imaging as a means to distinguish reentry vehicle (RV) deployments from decoy deployments seems unlikely." So indeed it is. But distinguishing between warheads and decoys has nothing to do with tracking and destroying the post-boost vehicle. The report goes on to suggest that although American heat-sensing devices could detect the hot exhaust of the post-boost vehicles' engines, "these emissions could be reduced by

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using cold gas thrusters, or shrouds." But this is purely gratuitous. It is conceivable to use cold compressed gas to power PBVs. But because the energy content of cold gas is so low, a PBV that ran on it would have to pack so much gas that there would be no room for anything else.

As for "shrouds"—mythical skirts that would sprout from a rocket to hide its exhaust—the report gives no hint of how they could be built, nor of how the shrouds themselves could avoid getting hot enough to be detected. When something produces heat, that heat has to go somewhere; one would think that eminent physicists would remember that.

The second part of the chapter's main message is that decoys and other penetration aids are so good that they cannot be distinguished by observation, no matter how accurate. One looks in vain through this part of the chapter for *any* evidence to support its conclusions. Instead, the reader learns that the conclusions are based on "general considerations." Certainly they are "general," and some of them—e.g., that decoys are perfect by definition—are unbelievably ignorant as well.

Of course, it is easier to define decoys as perfect than to make perfect decoys. How does one fix things so that the temperature and the motion of a body weighing a couple of pounds will match those of a similarly shaped body that weighs one hundred times as much? The report gives no evidence. It just assumes. For example, the report stipulates that the decoys would be spun, just as warheads are spun. But if the PBV imparts the same spinning motion to a tinfoil balloon and to a warhead, these very different objects will necessarily spin with an easily recognizable difference. As for another quality of decoys that supposedly makes them indistinguishable from warheads, their infra-red emissions, or "signatures," the U.S. has long since found that decoys and warheads give off recognizably different ones.

FINALLY, there is the question of the survivability of defensive assets. The authors of the report obviously believe that such assets could not possibly survive in peacetime—much less in wartime. Just as obviously, their conviction does not proceed from any scientific or technical facts. It is interesting to see how these eminent physicists try to present their political prejudice regarding anti-missile defense in the guise of scientific judgment.

In peacetime, asserts the report, space-based assets might be subject to "covert attacks." The authors do not say what would constitute the attack, or how it could be kept covert, or why the space station being attacked would not have its sensors looking for an attack and its countermeasures ready to move out of the way or to repel it. As the authors imagine it, the enemy's "space mines" would align themselves next to the defensive satellites, and shadow them, ready to blow up—and the defensive satellites would let them do it.

Why? The authors claim that to program battle stations to destroy any satellites that tried such shadowing maneuvers, and actually to enforce a "keep-out zone" around our defensive battle stations, would be "problematic." Indeed, it was problematic for the U.S. frigate *Stark* to defend itself against missile attack in the Persian Gulf—but only because U.S. policy had apparently led the ship's captain not to turn the ship's defense on "automatic." There is, then, a problem with keep-out zones. But it is in no way a technical problem.

Later, the authors state that the "space mines" could be "stealthed" so that the defensive stations would not see them coming. But they are adamant that the defensive stations themselves could never be "stealthed"—and they cite the difference in *size* as one of the main reasons why. Anyone who so writes has clearly never been involved in the "stealthing" of anything. There is no doubt that reduction and alteration of radar and infra-red "signatures" would play an important role in any effort to attack the defense, and in any effort to defend the defense. But the signature modification of aircraft amounts to a contest of detail; the winners are those who actually manage to hide better, and whose sensors prove better at seeing through the other side's attempt at hiding.

In wartime, the principal threat to defensive stations, according to the report, would be nuclear-tipped missiles sent up directly to destroy them. Through the magic of arithmetic, the authors conjure the following: "If one credits the offense with a nuclear [anti-satellite] attack capable of flying to 1,000 km altitude in 300 seconds, launching 10 offensive interceptors against each platform under attack and deploying 1,000 decoys and 2 hardened warheads from each interceptor, the defense . . . needs to address approximately 30 targets per second and a total of approximately 10,000 targets per battle station." The point of this is that the laser stations could not begin to defend themselves against so many threats. But why should a laser station built to destroy boosters in a second or so spend its time swatting thousands of decoys nearby when it can destroy the few boosters that carry them?

Based on its arithmetic, the report concludes that "Direct ascent nuclear attacks are so threatening that no directed energy battle stations in low earth orbit can be presumed to be survivable on their own." But the fact is that regardless of what is packed atop any anti-satellite booster, that booster constitutes one and only one problem for the defensive station. This is not to deny that any one station can be overwhelmed, but even if the offense knew the precise location of each defensive station, a very large number of

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anti-satellite weapons would be required to overwhelm each station.

THE mistakes and the sleight of hand in the report are so many and so important that it is impossible to regard the whole as an honest product. Rather, the report must be regarded as an act of low politics. It is not an objective evaluation of the state of the art of directed-energy weapons. It is a document intended to bolster campaigns to keep SDI in its research-forever deploy-never phase. Yet even as such, it is not a serious argument against SDI, aimed at scientists in the field. Clearly, anyone acquainted with the field—and indeed almost anyone who gave the report a close reading—would see that it does not argue, but rather plants deceptive axioms. Hence we must conclude that the report was not meant to stand up to close reading. Its intention was to dazzle casual readers—mostly the press—and to generate the kinds of headlines that in fact it generated. In other words, the authors took their prestigious academic affiliations and lent them to the service of a political cause.

If this kind of thing had been done—as indeed it has been done many times before—under the auspices of the Union of Concerned Scientists, or the Soviet Committee for Peace against the Nuclear Threat, there would be nothing surprising about it. But this report bears the imprimatur of the American Physical Society, which is supposed to represent the views of America's physicists; this makes it both shocking in itself and a sign of even worse things. As Frederick Seitz of the Rockefeller University, himself a former president of the American Physical Society, has noted, the report's willingness to neglect professional standards for the sake of political objectives has ominous precedents:

> Physicists with long memories will recall that when the Nazis came into power in Germany in the 1930's, the German physics journals—which had been, until then, among the finest in the world, as the journals of the American Physical Society are today—began to publish work of questionable quality. That was one of the earliest indications of the decline of German science in the pre-World War II period. One thinks also of the unfortunate depths to which some Soviet scientists, especially in genetics, have descended at various times to satisfy the prevailing currents of political thought in the Soviet Union.

Seitz, however, has been one of the very few physicists who have challenged the report. In fairness one must note that few have read it, and fewer still are acquainted with the field. Moreover, those who are in the field are mostly under contract to the U.S. government. Hence the public had a right to expect the government to issue a responsible refutation of the report. But the government—and specifically the Pentagon's Strategic Defense Initiative Organization (SDIO)—has limited itself to a lame two-page comment that does not contradict any of the report's specific points. Its strongest statement is that "we would not have made several of the assumptions they made in defining the technical requirements."

But why did the Pentagon not lay out what the correct assumptions are, and explain why they are indeed correct? The answer lies in a fault deep in the Reagan administration's approach to SDI—the very fault that made the report's thrust possible in the first place. The administration has gone out of its way to define SDI as research into a question it officially regards as entirely open: *whether* anti-missile defense is possible. Thus, the administration has framed the SDI program as abstractly as possible; it has not come up with a realistic definition of the threat we face, and of the job to be done to meet the threat, which it is willing to defend in public. Without such a definition—without, in other words, an anchor in reality—one set of assumptions is as good as another.

Perhaps the principal reason for this perennial state of suspended animation is that the Reagan administration has sought to defer grappling with the considerable diplomatic, bureaucratic, and political consequences of committing itself actually to building anti-missile defenses. Thus, the administration has not said: *Recognizing that time is the key to most human contests, let us build the best defensive weapons we can with what we have today, against the threat that our intelligence can discover, or that we ourselves are incorporating into our own offensive forces.* Instead the administration has said: *Let us give free rein to our imagination of what the most extreme threat might be in the distant future, and use that as a benchmark for judging the adequacy of our present defensive technology.* This is a process without logical end.

The APS report's capacity for mischief stems from the fact that the basic premises of the SDI program, which it so artfully caricatures, are seen by many to have been dictated by the "best and the brightest" of American science. To this there is a straightforward answer. The President ought to convene a body of experts, just as eminent as the ones responsible for the APS report—but this time people who *want* the U.S. to have anti-missile defenses—and ask them if any other premises and approaches are scientifically tenable. But, alas, one fears that the Reagan administration would be almost as uncomfortable with such a report as the American Physical Society itself.

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The Imperial Congress

George Szamuely

A REVISIONIST version of American history is in the process of being written to account for and to justify the newly assertive role of Congress in the conduct of foreign policy. Like the revisionist history of the 1960's, which created a myth of American belligerence as the principal cause of the cold war, the revisionist history of the 1970's has given rise to a myth of its own: that with the emergence of the United States as a major world power, successive Presidents have violated the letter and spirit of the Constitution, have arrogated to themselves illegitimate powers, have ignored, deceived, bullied, and tricked the legislature, and have thereby led the nation into all sorts of reckless and even illegal overseas commitments. As the revisionists see it, this tawdry record has in turn virtually required Congress to reassert itself, to regain at least partial control of the policy-making apparatus of the state, and hence to ensure that the American government will once more function in conformity with the intent of the Framers of the Constitution.

In the new revisionist interpretation such congressional initiatives as the War Powers Resolution (1973), the Hughes-Ryan Amendment to the Foreign Assistance Act (1974), the Clark Amendment to the International Security Assistance and Arms Export Control Act (1976), the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act (1978), and, of course, the five Boland Amendments to a variety of Defense Appropriation and Intelligence Authorization Acts (1982-5), are landmarks charting a so-far imperfect reassertion of the will of the people against an overmighty executive—an "imperial Presidency," to use the now-famous phrase of the historian Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr. By demanding full information and increased oversight on every aspect of policy, by exerting restraints and prohibitions, and by putting into effect with growing self-confidence its "power of the purse," Congress, it is hoped, can direct policy toward more humane and responsible ends abroad and help restore the system of "checks-and-balances" at home.

Unfortunately, like the revisionist history of the 60's, this one too is based on a tendentious misreading of both the distant and the recent past. It falsifies the intent of the Founding Fathers. It provides a misleading account of the relationship between Presidents and Congress over the last two centuries. It ignores two-and-a-half decades of fruitful collaboration between the executive and legislature after 1945, mostly during periods when opposing parties dominated the two branches of government. Finally, it offers a thinly disguised ideological cover to the attempts of the post-Vietnam Congress to "reclaim" for itself powers that it never legitimately possessed. In short, it aims at replacing an allegedly "imperial Presidency" with the rationale for an imperial Congress.

CONTRARY to today's prevailing view, the reason the Framers of the Constitution assigned specific responsibilities to the different arms of the government was not only to safeguard against the emergence of an overmighty executive. The fear of excessive power accruing to the *legislature* was at least as great, and in fact it was that particular fear which preoccupied Madison and Hamilton. In *Federalist* 49, for example, James Madison spoke of "the tendency of republican governments . . . to an aggrandizment of the legislative at the expense of other departments." And in *Federalist* 51 he continued: "The remedy for this inconveniency is to divide the legislature into different branches; and to render them, by different modes of election and different principles of action, as little connected with each other as the nature of their common functions . . . will admit." John Jay also warned, in *Federalist* 64: "It surely does not follow that because they [the people] have given the power of making laws to the legislature, that therefore they should likewise give them power to do every other act of sovereignty by which the citizens are to be bound and affected."

Indeed, it is not too much to say that the prospect of a legislative body possessed of the power

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of the purse ("the most complete and effectual weapon with which any constitution can arm the immediate representatives of the people"—Madison); entrusted also with the task of creating the agencies of government and investing them with the appropriate grants of authority; responsible for the collection of "taxes, duties, imposts, and excises, to pay the debts and to provide for the common defense and general welfare of the United States"; and empowered "to raise and support armies," to coin money, to regulate commerce, and to declare war—all this filled many of the Framers with a fear that the evils of the old system of government against which they had rebelled would thereby be reproduced. Out of this wholly understandable fear arose Article 2 of the Constitution which stipulated that there should exist an institution, hitherto unknown to any previous republican form of government, called the Presidency.

Presidents, though responsible for the execution of the laws and hence the servants of Congress, would also be its masters for it was they who would be entrusted with speaking for the nation as a whole in all its dealings with foreign states. Presidents would negotiate treaties; the role of Congress would be restricted to ratification by only one of its houses, the Senate. A term of office was to be specified by the Constitution which could not be altered by any legislative decree without a constitutional amendment (otherwise, Hamilton argued in *Federalist* 68, a President "might . . . be tempted to sacrifice his duty to his complaisance for those whose favor was necessary to the duration of his official consequence"). By specifying that "The President shall . . . receive for his services, a compensation, which shall be neither increased nor diminished during the period for which he shall have been elected," the Founding Fathers explicitly attempted to safeguard the prerogatives of the executive against the incursions of the legislature. (Hamilton in *Federalist* 73: "The legislature, with a discretionary power over the salary and emoluments of the Chief Magistrate, could render him as obsequious to their will as they might think proper to make him.") Finally, in his capacity as Commander-in-Chief, the President would share with no one else, least of all with another branch of government, his authority over the armed forces of the nation ("Decision, activity, secrecy, and dispatch will generally characterize the proceedings of one man in a much more eminent degree than the proceedings of any greater number"—Hamilton in *Federalist* 70).

Moreover, it was in order to restrain the often parochial and vacillating will of Congress that the Framers granted the President the extraordinary power of veto, requiring a majority fully of two-thirds plus one vote in both Houses to overrule. Madison, hardly a friend of overmighty executives, justified this constitutional provision in *Federalist* 51.

Notwithstanding what has often been asserted, all this was not a case of aristocrats trying to put together a set of institutional safeguards to check the inevitable excesses of democracy. The constitutional provisions were in recognition of the fact that the tasks of deliberation and oversight, of regulation and appropriation, are wholly different from those of administration. Laws specify the conditions under which government agencies can operate, just as the rules of a game define the boundaries within which sports can take place. But the aim is to facilitate, not to obstruct. The executive, with its accumulated experience of attempting to enforce rules and regulations, must act as a permanent check on a legislative process that would otherwise be out of control.

The executive's power of veto was granted by the Constitution so as to enable the national interest to override the sectional interest. It meant that from the beginning, the Framers envisaged the office of the Presidency as the summit of government and not merely as a coequal branch. Both through its responsibility for the efficient and swift dispatch of the affairs of state, and through its being the "organ of intercourse between the nation and foreign nations" (Hamilton), the Presidency, not the Congress or the judiciary, was to be assigned the task of national leadership.

It is extraordinary, then, that although envisaged as a check on the overmighty legislature, and as the directing force of the Republic, the executive was characterized during the first hundred years or so of its existence by weakness and subservience to Congress. Tocqueville registered his surprise at this: "The President of the United States possesses almost royal prerogatives which he has no occasion to use. . . . In everything important which he does, he is directly or indirectly subject to the legislature; where he is entirely independent of it, he can do almost nothing." He went on to offer two explanations, the first rather obvious: since "it is generally in its relations with foreign powers that the executive power of a nation has the chance to display its skill and strength," and since the United States did not interact intensively with any other nation, the President did not really have all that much to do. Secondly, Tocqueville observed, American Presidents spent their term of office preoccupied with devising schemes to win public esteem so that they could run again, rather than with adopting necessary but unpopular measures.

BUT Tocqueville failed to see the real problem. By promulgating the separation of powers the Framers had left deliberately vague the whole issue of where ultimate sovereignty resided. The legislature made laws, the executive executed them, the judiciary decided whether they were in conformity with the Constitution. All very straightforward. But this "har-

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monious system of mutual frustration" (in Richard Hofstadter's words) could only be surely applicable to civil situations in which, indeed, class had to be balanced against class, interest against interest, faction against faction, and where outcomes were not predetermined but were the result of numerous individual decisions and encounters with other individuals. Try as one might, however, one could not prescribe a system of *government* modeled on this 18th-century notion of a harmony of interests. In a struggle between the legislature and the executive, who would have the authority to adjudicate? What if, for instance, the presidential power of veto proved of no avail in checking the encroachments of the lawmakers? Would that be the last word on the matter?

An exasperated President Jefferson once wrote in despair that "a strict observance of the written laws is doubtless *one* of the high duties of a good citizen, but it is not the *highest*. The laws of necessity, of self-preservation, of saving our country when in danger, are of higher obligation. To lose our country by a scrupulous adherence to written law, would be to lose the law itself . . . thus absurdly sacrificing the end to the means."

Jefferson was making a point, familiar to anyone who had followed the 17th-century debates on the matter, that the sovereign could not be bound by his own laws. But again, who was to be the sovereign? John Locke, in the *Second Treatise on Government*, after having pronounced the Legislature the "*one Supream Power* . . . to which all the rest are and must be subordinate," then went on to speak of the prerogative of the executive "to act according to discretion, for the publick good, without the prescription of the Law, and sometimes even against it. . . . For *Prerogative* is *nothing but the Power of doing publick good without a Rule* . . . a latitude left to the Executive power, to do many things of choice, which the laws do not prescribe."

Small wonder, then, that the Framers were torn and that the thinkers and politicians who followed them were thoroughly confused. "Sovereignty resides in the people" and "A government of laws and not men" were useful slogans, but provided no real answers. A President who was to be the leader of the nation as well as the executor of the will of Congress? When Locke attempted to face the consequences of his own prescription to separate the branches of government and asked himself who would adjudicate in any conflict between them, he declared that "there can be no *Judge on Earth*. . . . The People have no other remedy in this . . . but to *appeal to Heaven*." In the United States one could and did appeal to the Constitution: Article 1 specified the responsibilities of Congress, Article 2 the responsibilities of the President, and it would be up to the Supreme Court to decide if the one had been encroaching on the other. But what about those discretionary powers that Locke mentioned? And were not those discretionary powers of the very essence of government, especially in all matters pertaining to relations with other states?

IN FACT, throughout American history, at least until recently, the exigencies of exerting the nation's will in a world full of rivals required the expansion of the executive's discretionary powers. Thus in this area at least, the question of sovereignty was implicitly resolved in favor of the Presidency. Notwithstanding Tocqueville's (accurate) observation of presidential weakness vis-à-vis Congress, when a chief executive saw the need to act, he was generally able to do so.

As early as 1801 Thomas Jefferson issued secret orders to a naval squadron to go to the Mediterranean to "chastise" the Barbary pirates who had been looting American merchant ships; Congress, although endowed with the power "to declare war," was not notified for more than six months, in Jefferson's first annual message. Two years later, Jefferson was to purchase Louisiana for $15 million from Napoleon before Congress had appropriated funds for this purpose. Later he was to be accused of restocking military arsenals using money Congress had not yet voted him.

In the annexation of Florida and Texas, Presidents led and Congress ratified. However weak the executive seemed to Tocqueville, it was powerful enough to enable President Polk to initiate the Mexican War in 1845 (three years later the Senate passed a resolution thanking General Zachary Taylor for his successes in "a war unnecessarily and unconstitutionally begun by the President of the United States"). Attempts by a few Congressmen to reprimand President Pierce for the "unauthorized" destruction of Greytown in 1854 failed ignominiously. Nor did Lincoln feel hemmed in by Congress when in April 1861 he ordered the blockade of Southern ports and demanded that money not yet appropriated be spent on increasing the size of the armed forces despite the explicit stipulation of the Constitution that the legislature was "to provide for organizing, arming, and disciplining the militia. . . ." Lincoln's suspension of *habeas corpus* was sanctioned by Congress within twelve months ("I will violate the Constitution, if necessary, to save the Union"); moreover, he freed the slaves without bothering to consult anyone.

True, there were occasions when Congress rose to challenge the prerogatives of the President, as in the attempt to censure Andrew Jackson for dismissing his Secretary of Treasury. In 1868 Congress went even further and sought to impeach Andrew Johnson after he had fired Edwin M. Stanton, his Secretary of War, in defiance of the newly enacted Tenure of Office Act. But Congress never sought to prescribe or proscribe any actions in the area of national security. Although all foreign treaties, as required by the Constitution, were submitted to the Senate for approval, it has been estimated that between 1789 and 1939, over 1,300 executive agreements were concluded by

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successive Presidents with foreign countries without the consent of the Senate. And it was widely recognized that just such executive agreements, needing neither prior authorization nor subsequent ratification, constituted presidential leadership.

The view of the legislators on this matter was on the whole reflected best in John Marshall's pronouncement in 1800 in the House of Representatives, prior to becoming Chief Justice: "The President is the constitutional representative of the United States with regard to foreign nations. He [is] . . . most competent to determine when, how, and upon what subjects negotiation may be urged with the greatest prospect of success. . . . The nature of transactions with foreign nations, moreover, requires caution and unity of design, and their success frequently depends on secrecy and dispatch." Which, as we have seen, was probably more or less the way the Framers wanted it.

In a famous case, *United States* v. *Curtiss-Wright Export Corporation* (1936), Justice Sutherland spoke of the "very delicate, plenary and exclusive power of the President as the sole organ of the federal government in the field of international relations—a power which does not require as a basis for its exercise an act of Congress. . . ."

These words spell out the extent to which the Presidency, and not Congress, had by that time come to embody the national sovereignty. And a good thing it was, given the transformation of the United States in the 20th century into a world power, and the consequent requirement that Presidents be enabled to act on the international scene in accordance with a broad understanding of the national interest. By the first decades of the century, though plenty of Congressmen were still being successfully elected and reelected while happily singing an earlier version of George McGovern's "Come Home America," no politician could hope to get anywhere near the White House with a similar message. Congress might refuse to ratify the Versailles Treaty (1919) and enact the Neutrality Acts (1935-7), but so long as the presidential prerogative in the field of national security was recognized, whatever isolationist or parochial mood prevailed in Congress could be neutralized.

In the aftermath of World War II, even that isolationist mood was tempered by the widespread feeling *within* Congress that the United States had to take the lead in combating Communism and Soviet expansionism. And thus were ushered in over twenty years of fruitful bipartisan cooperation between executive and legislature in the field of foreign policy. Arthur Vandenberg, the Republican chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee and a former diehard isolationist, nevertheless proved instrumental in getting the Democratic President Harry Truman's $400 million Greek-Turkish aid bill (which inaugurated the policy of containment) through the Senate in 1947. The Democrat Lyndon Johnson, as Senate majority leader in the Republican Eisenhower years, played a key role in the passage of a 1955 joint resolution of Congress at the time of the Quemoy-Matsu crisis, to the effect that "The President is authorized to employ the armed forces of the United States as he deems necessary for the purpose of securing and protecting Formosa and the Pescadores against armed attack."

Johnson, and Sam Rayburn, the Democratic Speaker of the House, were also later to play a crucial role in the passage of the joint resolution that enunciated the so-called Eisenhower Doctrine in 1957: "The President is authorized to undertake, in the general area of the Middle East, military assistance programs with any nation or group of nations of that area desiring such assistance." Seven years earlier Truman's old enemy, Senator Robert Taft, along with another very powerful Republican Senator, William Knowland, had provided the crucial congressional support for the "unauthorized" use of American forces stationed in Japan to assist the government of South Korea, though there had been no mutual defense treaty with that country, though a specific request for aid had not even been received in Washington, and though Congress had not been informed of the deployment of U.S. forces until two days after the presidential order.

Even the famous (or infamous) Gulf of Tonkin Resolution (1964), which read that "The United States is prepared, as the President determines, to take all necessary steps, including the use of armed force, to assist any member or protocol state of the Southeast Asia Collective Defense Treaty requesting assistance in its defense of its freedom," passed the House unanimously, and received only two negative votes in the Senate. Later on, of course, Congressmen would claim that President Johnson had tricked them into endorsing this so-called "escalation" of the Vietnam war, and set about trying to repeal the Resolution (they finally succeeded in 1971). But the point is that in 1964 there was still a sufficient consensus on the objectives of American foreign policy for the resolution to be moved in the Senate by the Democrat William Fulbright and to be endorsed by the Republican Barry Goldwater.

Then in June 1969, with the war in Vietnam still in progress, Congress fired its first salvo against the power of the President to conclude executive agreements, the major means by which Presidents had been able to ensure the unity and continuity of national policy despite the vacillations and political partisanship of Congress. Fulbright sponsored a resolution, subsequently passed by the Senate, that the United States could not make a binding national commitment to use military force on behalf of another country unless that commitment had been accomplished "by means of treaty, statute, or concurrent resolution of both Houses or Congress, specifically providing for such a commitment." When, a year later,

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the Nixon administration concluded a military-base agreement with Spain containing various security guarantees, the Senate responded with a resolution declaring the agreement not to be a national commitment, irrespective of anything that may have been promised to the Spanish government.

Nixon rejected this, rightly claiming that Congress could not, by subsequent concurrent resolution, strip an executive order of its legally binding effect. But this was just step one. In 1971, when the Nixon administration signed an agreement with Portugal extending credits worth $400 million as well as facilitating the use of certain military bases, the Senate demanded that Nixon submit the agreement for ratification just as if it were a treaty. He refused, arguing, again correctly, that Congress lacked the constitutional authority to legislate in advance as to which international agreements were to be made by treaty, and which by executive agreement. These were the early stages of a campaign then beginning to gather momentum to reduce the President to a mere figurehead who would have no powers but what Congress granted him.

The onslaught on the Presidency that took place in the aftermath of frustration and humiliation in Vietnam was justified on the grounds that serious abuses of power had occurred in the executive and that the time had come for the legislature, the directly elected representatives of the people, to reclaim the powers that had been usurped by a succession of war-making Presidents. Naturally, however, overseeing the activities of the executive would not be enough. Nor would withholding appropriate funds.

Right from the start the intention was to move from restraining and inhibiting the executive to proposing and subsequently implementing policy.

The campaign proper began with a provision in the Defense Appropriations Act of 1970 which stipulated that "none of the funds appropriated by this Act shall be used to finance the introduction of ground troops into Laos and Thailand." Then came the Cooper-Church Amendment to the supplemental Foreign Authorization Act of 1971: "None of the funds authorized or appropriated pursuant to this or any other Act may be used to finance the introduction of United States ground combat troops into Cambodia, or to provide United States advisers to or for Cambodian military forces in Cambodia." Then, along similar lines, came the Mansfield Amendment to the Defense Procurement Authorization Act of 1972: it must be "the policy of the United States to terminate at the earliest practicable date all military operations of the United States in Indochina, and to provide for the prompt and orderly withdrawal of all United States military forces." And then of course came the War Powers Resolution of 1973, enacted over President Nixon's veto, which stipulated that armed forces, once introduced, were to be withdrawn after sixty days unless Congress authorized otherwise.

Again in 1974 the Hughes-Ryan Amendment to the Foreign Assistance Act provided that "no funds appropriated under this or any other Act may be expended by or on behalf of the Central Intelligence Agency for operations in foreign countries, other than activities intended solely for obtaining necessary intelligence." Two years later the Clark Amendment to the International Security Assistance and Arms Export Control Act denied funds for military operations in Angola "unless and until . . . Congress enacts a joint resolution approving the furnishing of such assistance."

Legislative prohibitions, in other words, were not merely meant to fetter the President's discretionary powers, they were actually meant to lead to different policy outcomes from those which the President as "the constitutional representative of the nation" had intended. If to these prohibitions are added the Ethics in Government Act of 1978 (which the Justice Department now claims is unconstitutional) and the innumerable House and Senate select committees investigating every department of government, trying to unearth scandals and submitting officials to the most intense scrutiny, a picture emerges of a legislature arrogating to itself powers it not only never had, or was ever designed to have, but ones which it is uniquely unqualified by its very nature to exercise.

Not only do prohibitions limit the flexibility necessary for decision-making, they also often stand in contradiction to one another. Enacted for a variety of different reasons, ranging from the partisan to the ideological, *in toto* they add up to an incoherent foreign policy. Nor are the restrictions pursued with the kind of consistency or flexibility by which they could bring results. Though Congressmen today have far bigger staffs at their disposal than ten or fifteen years ago, and though traveling to exotic countries is a prerequisite of making a name for oneself as a national figure, they tend not to know a great deal about the world outside. Consequently they must rely for the information necessary to implement their policies on officials of the very executive whose stated objectives they are seeking to thwart. Little wonder that congressional foreign-policy-making has become lost in a miasma of conflicting goals.

Take the issue of aid for the Nicaraguan resistance. When the question first came up in the House of Representatives in 1982, the first Boland Amendment was adopted which barred all aid to the rebels except that used to interdict the flow of supplies from the Sandinista government to the Communist guerrillas in El Salvador. (The Amendment also stipulated that "none of the funds provided in this Act may be used . . . to furnish military equipment, military training or advice, or other support for military activities . . . for the purpose of overthrowing the government

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of Nicaragua"—thus bizarrely proposing an American stake in the perpetuation of the Sandinista regime.) The Reagan administration accepted this on the grounds that it was better than a total ban. Yet how it would be ensured that arms going to the Nicaraguan resistance would be used exclusively to fight on behalf of the El Salvador government rather than against the Sandinistas was never clarified by the policy-making establishment on Capitol Hill.

A year later, in 1983, the House decided by a 33-vote margin to ban any aid to the *contras*, but the Senate voted to approve the continuation of the entire program; the two chambers then agreed on a compromise allocating $24 million to the resistance. Significantly, this second Boland Amendment had a proviso—unconstitutional on the face of it—barring the President from spending any discretionary funds to continue the program after the $24 million ran out unless he secured congressional approval. When the President sought such approval in 1984 the House denied it by a 64-vote margin. In August 1985, $27 million in non-lethal "humanitarian" aid was voted for the *contras*. In August 1986 both House and Senate voted for $70 million in military and $30 million in non-lethal aid.

As if all this were not confusing enough, Congress had stipulated that the August 1985 package of $27 million be administered by the State Department and not the CIA or the Defense Department; in addition, although all aid was barred from October 1984 to September 1985 during the period of the third and most restrictive version of the Boland Amendments, the President was allowed to spend $14 million on assisting the *contras* provided he reported to the Congress that the money was essential, and so long as both houses approved.

What is one to make of such a muddle? What *is* American foreign policy toward Central America? As the Iran-*contra* hearings continued week after week this summer, ostensibly to determine how best to improve the policy-making machinery of the U.S. government, but in reality trying to establish who was guilty of a criminal conspiracy to violate the Boland Amendment, no one—least of all Congress—seemed to know the answer to that question.

THE various prohibitions, vetoes, and constraints which Congress has been enacting in recent years are at best constitutionally dubious. As Dan Wallace, Jr., and Allan Gerson pointed out recently in the Washington *Post* (June 5), although Congress may have the power to withhold or not appropriate funds, "once funds have been appropriated it does not have the power to 'condition' how they will be spent if the effect is to emasculate constitutionally protected powers."

Congress is no more successful when it goes out of its way to usurp the power of the executive while also trying *not* to violate the Constitution. A case in point is the third and most restrictive form of the Boland Amendment, applicable from October 3, 1984 to September 30, 1985: "During the fiscal year 1985, no funds available to the Central Intelligence Agency, the Department of Defense, or any other agency or entity of the United States involved in intelligence activities may be obligated or expended for the purpose or which would have the effect of supporting, directly or indirectly, military or paramilitary operations in Nicaragua by any nation, group, organization, movement, or individual." The convoluted phrasing betrays the fact that the enacted legislation was the product of a devious compromise. Why not just simply say "No money for the *contras*" and be done with it? The reason is that from the start the Boland Amendments sought not to challenge the prerogative of the executive to make foreign policy. The aim was to avoid placing restrictions on the person of the President himself while thoroughly constricting the agencies of the government. A constitutional showdown was thus avoided and the Defense Appropriations and Intelligence Authorization Bill could become law.

But this is where the problems start. If the President is to be exempt from a prohibition, might he not be able to do anything he wants to do, simply by working outside the normal channels of government? What is to stop him or his staff from seeking funds for any of his projects from whatever sources, at home or abroad, as he deems fit? In such a situation a number of governments can come into existence, all answerable to one man. This state of affairs is known as despotism: it would be the ultimately ironic consequence of the rise of an imperial Congress.

Seen even in its own terms, the 15-year rule of the imperial Congress has been remarkably unsuccessful. Laws are laws and policies are policies and the two do not mix very readily. Thus policy failures abound. Congressional arms embargoes during the Cyprus crisis meant that the United States, the senior NATO power, was unable to bring any pressure to bear on a conflict between two NATO countries. The Clark Amendment ensured the survival and entrenchment of the Communist regime in Angola. The Church Committee hearings on the CIA almost destroyed the organization. Even during the present Iran-*contra* crisis, Congress has totally failed to provide national leadership. Its anxieties as to whether the Boland Amendment had been violated or not seem to represent, at best, the parochial concern of a Congress dominated by Democrats seeking to inflict on a Republican President as much damage as possible. At worst, and worst comes increasingly to seem the reality, they represent a total abdication of responsibility for national security.

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Israel: A House Divided?

Ruth R. Wisse

Dear B——,

Your first letter from Israel was not exactly what I had expected—no description of sunset falling against Jerusalem stone, of exotic walks through the Valley of the Cross. You are obviously in the thick of settling in, already as harassed as a native. When you had to interrupt your letter to deal with the delegation from the building committee, come to inform you of the new solar heater being installed on the roof, I could almost see you circling index finger against thumb in that dispiriting Israeli gesture that says, "Be patient because I can't attend to you now and given the way things are around here God knows when I can. . . ."

Within weeks of your arrival in Israel you already exude civic pride—if pride is what it is—at having joined, as you put it, "the most familial national community on earth." From the illustrative examples you cite I'm not so sure you consider all this family feeling to be a point in the country's favor, though I do appreciate how boldly it contrasts with the theme of everything we read here about Israel, a land supposedly being torn apart by divisions of one kind or another. Just this morning there was another feature in the paper about the deepening chasm between those who want to "return territories for peace" and those who "put their trust in power and land." The reporter warns of the impending civil war that threatens a once-united nation. In the case of this particular journalist it has been threatening so long one suspects he can hardly wait for the first internecine murder to justify the note of panic he has been sounding, year after year.

In your letter, at any rate, the internal argument appears in a very different light. Since no one has yet found a way of persuading most Arabs of Israel's rightful and permanent presence in the region, the Jews have to argue among themselves the hypothetical question of which approach is likelier to overcome enemy resistance. The longer the argument continues, the stronger it grows. But so does the need for security. The debaters know that unless their unity exceeds their fractiousness they will not see many new dawns. The continuing peril to their country, in other words, seems to have forced Israelis into an uncommon and often unwelcome intimacy; deeply divided over how best to secure the peace, they nevertheless have no choice but to make common cause. Neighbors fight over whether Jews should settle in Arab-populated Hebron, then go off together on the evening's civil patrol of the streets. You even get a strange hybrid like that colleague of yours who is so angry at both partners in the present coalition government that he has told you even treason is justified. Yet when you suggest to him that his political disaffection may end by turning his own children against their country, he bridles: one son is an officer with six years of military service, the other a candidate for the paratroopers! This man expresses his disagreement with others by going to war with himself.

I recognize also the other side of the forced intimacy you describe, when the shouting stops and depression sets in. We were in Israel a few years ago. On our way to a wedding, the taxi had to stop for a unit of soldiers on maneuvers as it carried its "dead" and "wounded" across the road. The exhausted boys could hardly drag their feet behind them; they looked like an army of sleepwalkers. Our driver's mother sat beside him in the front seat, a large Moroccan woman who had been nattering for most of the trip but now, at the sight of the boys with their bandages and stretchers, sat up, transfixed, and began to incant the words, *sheyihyu bri'im*, they should only be healthy, may God keep them from harm. For a moment the mood was so grim I thought we were on our way not to a wedding but a funeral. But of course these periodic reminders of the country's very narrow margin for error are the stuff of Israeli life, and I suppose citizens grow used to them. After a few months you too may find yourself turning on the news every hour on the hour—as if it were perfectly normal for a working man to stop whatever he is doing when the clock strikes 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, to find out whether his country, or the child he has protecting it, is still alive.

The Israeli novels I've read bear out your observations on the familial character of Israeli so-

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ciety, but they all seem to me to censor the particular anxiety it occasions. In these fictional families wives cheat on their husbands, husbands on their wives; youngsters, raised in the clutches of cloying parents, can't break away from their suffocating love. A novel by Yaakov Shabtai, several hundred pages composed as a single sentence, seems to bind much of Tel Aviv together into one extended Jewish family in which everyone is vaguely miserable. But it seems to me that the misery at the heart of the Israeli family is not in fact vague and general but specific and acute. In no other place is every parent so bound to and separated from every other by the knowledge that he is raising a hostage to a patient enemy. You wonder whether, given the bounty on his head, there is any commodity in the world objectively more precious than an Israeli child.

The writers I'm referring to, a little like children who think they can't be seen when they cover their eyes, try to avoid the presence of the enemy by avoiding the subject. Maybe they think that by ignoring the great national question in their art they can escape its implications in their lives. Ordinary citizens are somewhat less guarded.

LAST YEAR while I was in Tel Aviv attending a conference on humor the Hofsteins took me along to the ceremony marking their son's completion of basic training in the tank corps. Having seen those photographs of flags and torches against the bleak mountaintop of Masada I thought I knew everything there was to know about this military rite of passage. In fact, I was surprised by everything I saw and heard, starting with the picnic basket Nina Hofstein packed for us and the mimeographed map she took along to help us find the way.

The ceremony was held not at Masada but at Latrun, near Jerusalem. The commander of the tank corps had decided it was too hard for most families to make the trip down to the desert, and found a more convenient central location. The army was also eager to create a permanent memorial to the soldiers killed at Latrun in 1948, so it turned over the old police fortress there to the tank corps for a commemorative museum. The cars inching bumper to bumper along the dirt road, the parents noisily hunting down their children among the hundreds of fellow soldiers, reminded me so much of my summers at Pripstein's Camp that I was hit by an incongruous wave of nostalgia.

The future tank brigade picnicked on the grass and amid the rocks until the sun began to set. To form the new museum, enemy tanks captured in each of Israel's wars had been brought to the site, so the younger Hofsteins had their fun scrambling over "Stalin II," a trophy (if I can recall the summary details on the crude plaque) from the Golan Heights in 1967. The conversation at supper concerned baguettes: a determined new immigrant from France had discovered a way of turning Israeli flour and water into authentic French bread. At one point the eldest son, the one we had come to fete, told his parents he was to be cited as the top soldier of his unit, and the commanding officer wanted to congratulate them before the ceremony. Suddenly everyone turned very shy. Afterward, it seemed bad form to talk of the boy's distinction.

If your summer camp was anything like Pripstein's, you may remember the sloped seats of a makeshift amphitheater, the eternal wait for the program to begin, the strain of watching amateurs trying to act like professionals. For me, what clinched the resemblance was the corps' entertainment troupe; in between speeches by the officers, the rabbi's invocation, and the presentation of arms, this musical ensemble of boys and girls rendered a series of songs: they sang of Shari's attraction to Ari the tankist, of Micki's defection from Uri the non-tankist. I may not have the names right.

I didn't know what to make of this resolutely informal setting. If no soldier's pledge to protect his country is ever taken lightly, the Israeli's demands so much more from him over a lifetime as to have become a commitment different in kind. But rather than deliberately heightening the ceremonial aspect of soldiering—as I should have thought one must do when trying to convince a populace of its mortal significance—the Israelis have altogether domesticated it. Except for the pledge itself, when I could feel the Hofsteins stiffening beside me, the whole evening was designed to be as casual as modern Israeli prose writing.

The most "familial" note of all was struck by the commander, who didn't look much older than his recruits. Here's what he said: "We in the corps know that you have entrusted to us your greatest treasures, your most prized possessions. Please be assured that your sons are our treasures too, and we know how to value them. We will care for them to the best of our ability. We will expose them to no needless danger. Even as we have to call on them to carry their part of the burden of security, we place a supreme worth on their lives and their well being." *Sheyihyu bri'im*, I almost expected him to add.

Hofstein, no fool, said to me following this little speech, "I hope no spy is present to tell our enemy how vulnerable we are." To which his wife Nina snapped, "If we were prepared to release 1,150 convicted Arab terrorists from our prisons in return for three Israeli soldiers, our enemies already know how vulnerable we are." But I sensed that neither parent was really unhappy to hear the young commander speaking so paternally of their children. He was only acknowledging what you yourself tell me about the country as a whole: the division between soldiers and civilians is so fluid and reversible that you can't stop treating your defenders as sons.

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So I agree with you that the accustomed emphasis in our media on Israel's political disunity is perversely misplaced. The story of the hour is not the split in the ranks of Israeli Jews but the continuing readiness of the large majority of Israelis to protect and mourn each other's children. Who, as late as the uprising in the Warsaw Ghetto, could have believed that any Jewish armed force would ever transcend party lines? Certainly no one familiar with the lower depths of Jewish politics before the birth of the state.

I'm less reassured, however, when you turn to describing the "familial conciliation" between religious and secular. You write that the conflict between the two factions should not obscure the national life they share; but what do you offer as evidence?

The case of Professor R. is admittedly curious: an authority on a particular branch of Hasidic theology, she is sought out by ultra-Orthodox yeshiva boys for instruction on the religious thought of their Master. The extreme sexual modesty enjoined upon these young men forbids them even to look at her, so when they come to the National Library to study manuscripts with their unlikely teacher they listen to her with lowered eyes. The whole thing strikes you as an unusual and heartening chain of influence within the same family—here we have traditional hasidic doctrines, as interpreted by modern Jewish scholars who have been trained in the academic specialty of comparative religion, making their reinvigorating way back into hasidic thought and practice. The growing numbers of the ultra-Orthodox to be seen at the National Library, that monument to the spirit of secular scholarship, suggest to you that this is no isolated case.

Certainly, the many interruptions in the flow of Jewish life from one generation to the next should make us appreciate the connections that remain. In a similar vein, I admit I've been impressed by the recent activities of my sister, who as part of her job at the Jewish Public Library here in Montreal conducts story hours for children of the city's various linguistic and ethnic groups. When a number of hasidic mothers asked her to do sessions in Yiddish she pulled out all the old books we had used in the Labor Zionist *Folkshule* and set about adapting them for the religious culture which their resolutely secularist authors had intended them to supplant and replace. I'm not sure what thrills her more, teaching all the old Labor pieties to these traditional Jews or using Yiddish again in a living context such as, today, only the Hasidim provide.

Even here in Montreal this give-and-take requires some compromise. My sister was startled when one of the mothers relayed to her the Rebbe's request that in speaking to the children she refrain from mentioning non-kosher animals. My sister protested that the three little pigs were, after all, part of God's creation, even if one is not permitted to eat them. But she nevertheless acceded to their wishes, on the grounds that if black parents were to ask her to avoid some area of sensitivity she would certainly strive to accommodate them, so why do less for Jews?

Her reasoning seems to me instructive. Had she reacted as a true member of the Jewish "family" she might have balked at so "irrational" a request, contrary to that spirit of curiosity and inquisitiveness which it is her job as a librarian to foster and encourage in the young. Living in a larger democratic polity offers her, instead, a usable model of tolerance: she can afford to be sweetly reasonable, knowing as she does that her *own* social, economic, and political prospects are not likely to be constrained by the hasidic ban on non-kosher language. In particular, she does not have to debate with the fundamentalist mothers whether her physical safety is better entrusted to God or to the army. The Canadian government is charged with that responsibility (and, fortunately for us, not about to be strained to the limit).

How different it is in Israel, where not all Jews are under equal obligation to the democratic polity they inhabit, and where cultural differences invade the political sphere. Thousands of ultra-Orthodox boys and girls express their attenuated relation to the Jewish state by refusing to serve in its armed forces, while a smaller number of outright anti-Zionists (including, from your description of them, Professor R.'s group) refuse to recognize a state that has not been fashioned exclusively by God. They use the library without offering any corresponding respect to the country that maintains it. They share with their fellow Jews a cultural heritage but no national responsibility.

Here your family feeling may offer more hindrance than help. Wherever individual Jews have lived in the past they have carried their share of the community's political burden. Observant Jews still do so—outside Israel. Only in the modern Jewish state is it possible for certain Jews to demonstrate contempt for secular authority by exploiting the reluctance of most Israelis to challenge their recalcitrant brothers. These tribal exceptions, which put a strain on democracy, certainly weaken family solidarity as well.

No doubt the state aims to appease its internal Jewish opponents at least in part because it is still facing far more serious external threats. This was so from the start, I know. In 1947, when Ben-Gurion and the leadership of the Jewish Agency were claiming united Jewish support for the establishment of a Jewish state they had to make certain that the anti-Zionist Agudat Israel would not breach the common front. The so-called "status quo" agreement was then worked out, to confirm the privileged status within the to-be-established state of the Sabbath, dietary laws, mat-

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rimonial laws, and guarantees of religious education. Though this negotiated settlement did not do much more than formalize certain practices that had been in effect under the British Mandatory government, its outcome set a pattern whereby the Orthodox minority has been able to exploit critical moments of inter-party strife to extend the religious boundaries of the "status quo." Exemption from military service for yeshiva students of Agudat Israel, which was part of the very vague original agreement, requires no compensating national service of the kind that other democracies require of their conscientious objectors. The handful of boys once affected by the arrangement has since grown a hundredfold.

Forgive me if I belabor the point, but your fur-hatted young men in the National Library do not strike me as a benign phenomenon, at least not politically. (Culturally, perhaps they are.) Can they, will they, make their peace with the state in the same spirit that they are being accommodated by it? Exemption from national service, in a country that requires so much from its citizens, puts those who "take advantage" of it into strange isolation. To be sure, their teachers persuade them that their long days of study are the supreme Jewish duty. But how do they deal with their masculine pride and fraternal conscience when all around them Jewish boys their own age—including those in the Zionist yeshivas—sacrifice years of study, and much more, to protecting them? They must know that only the national discipline of their fellow Jews ensures their religious freedom and their way of life. They must also know that they could not enjoy such cost-free bounty in any non-Jewish polity. The ideology that accepts all these benefits while scorning their source has to justify the resultant situation by ever more inflated spiritual claims.

I think of this whenever I read of those young men throwing stones at offenders of the Days of Rest, or burning bus shelters featuring provocatively sexual ads, or when I hear the quieter ones muttering "*shabbes, shabbes*" at transgressors of the Sabbath. In order to legitimate their abdication of national responsibility they have to be convinced that they too are really "soldiers," and in a truer struggle, for how else could youngsters raised in the Jewish religious tradition accept the daily sacrifice of other Jews in their stead?

I know that along with most veteran Israelis you consider this intra-Jewish issue far less compelling than the present and future problem posed by the Arabs living within Israel and the administered territories. Perhaps so, but as in all things that concern them, the question of these Arabs' status can only be resolved by the Arabs themselves—I mean, by the Arabs outside Israel. If the rejectionists were finally to accept the presence of Israel within negotiated borders, the rights and responsibilities of Israeli Arabs would be adjusted accordingly—as, one trusts, would the status of the remaining Jews in Arab lands. Other non-Jewish groups in Israel have been given, along with the rights they enjoy as citizens, the responsibilities they have sought. The Muslim Circassians, for example, who came to Palestine from Russia over a century ago, demanded and were granted the right to serve in Israel's armed forces. So too with the Druze, who were at first only permitted to volunteer for service but then, by their request, had conscription imposed on them as on Jewish citizens.

For obvious reasons, the Palestinian Arabs within Israel proper, although of course they are already citizens, have not yet followed suit. The full content of their citizenship, in other words, cannot be worked out until the larger Arab people decides to coexist with another sovereign people in the Middle East. In the case of the ultra-Orthodox Jews, however, the issue of civic equality can hardly be postponed.

I was stirred, finally, by your description of the familial national response to the trial of Ivan Demjanjuk taking place in Jerusalem. It must have occurred to more than one Israeli that the figure of 700,000 Jews murdered at Treblinka between 1941 and 1943, which includes the period of Ivan the Terrible's tenure there, exceeds the combined Jewish populations of Haifa and Jerusalem. Not so many years ago the theoreticians of divisiveness used to cite, as conclusive evidence, the antagonism between Jews from Western versus Eastern cultures. We were regaled with disturbing reports of Sephardi youngsters mocking the Yiddish-speaking "*vusvusim*," and of reciprocally hostile European immigrants denigrating the "*shvartse*" or "black" Jews from North Africa. Sometimes it was even worse, as when refugees from Hitler's Europe were referred to by the toughened natives as *sabon*—soap—a term so dreadful no one was willing to speculate whether the children who used it knew its derivation. (The ghetto survivor who first mentioned this to me couldn't hold back his tears.)

Now your bus driver, a Sephardi, asks his passengers to be quiet so all can hear over the radio the witness testifying at the Demjanjuk trial about the gassing of children. What differentiates him from your wife, who has pulled her car over to the curb to weep as she listens, or from the kid with the Walkman whom she sees crying as he passes? It had been my fervent hope that the Demjanjuk trial would be held in the United States or in the Soviet Union, rather than in Israel, where it subjects the population to so much greater suffering than the accused. I don't know what the Jewish people in Israel will do with so much accumulated pain, but without question they all now participate in it equally.

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The same historical memory has begun to engulf them all.

There is an odd omission in your letter, or at least it stops short before reaching what I would take as the highest expression of the national interdependence. Your study of the Israeli hothouse doesn't mention the Law of Return, which allowed you, a Jew, to enter as a citizen rather than an immigrant. The passage of this law by the Israeli parliament in 1950 represented an attempt to compensate the Jewish family that remained beyond the borders of Israel for the historic losses and humiliations it had endured over the centuries. It gave the Wandering Jew a home. If one traditional explanation for the expulsion of the Jews from their land and for their centuries of exile was that God was punishing them for their sins, the state of Israel, like a kindlier, earthly father, now declared itself the property of every Jew who wanted to "return" to it. Ben-Gurion made this explicit when he remarked that the state was not *granting* the right of settlement to Jews the way countries—including Israel—sometimes grant free entry to refugees; rather, the right of settlement belonged to every Jew simply by virtue of his being a Jew.

I leave it to you with your deep knowledge of the law to explore the ramifications of this offer. Who is a Jew? What about Jewish criminals? Does the law apply to apostates? What I'm curious about is the role this law has played in the national drama. It was prompted by a very generous impulse. A populace that had cultivated a land, fought for it, militarily and diplomatically, now offered it to fellow Jews as their own. Today the absorption process continues apace, reaching out not only to Ethiopians and Russians but even to a Western newcomer like you. Those special Hebrew classes the school is providing for your children and the favorable mortgage loan you've been offered by the government are probably only a small part of the welcome you've received as citizen-settler. Israel is proving itself the exemplary brother's keeper.

Yet brotherhood is complicated by the fact that its claims are, or could become, reciprocal. Today's benefactor may be tomorrow's dependent. And the Law of Return, which enunciates the responsibility assumed by Israeli Jews for those outside the country, can also be read as a statement of mutual obligation. The offer to Diaspora Jews is an expression of unqualified and unconditional trust. If Israel were in trouble, would a Jew be required to come to its protection? Is the law equally binding on both partners?

I'm sure you remember Hillel Halkin's book of a few years ago, *Letters to an American Jewish Friend*. He called it "a Zionist's polemic," arguing that the Jewish homeland, once established, had become the only place for a Jew to live. His foil in the book, an American Jew who is quite content to remain in the U.S. and to whom Halkin's "Letters" are addressed, expresses satisfaction that during an entire summer in Israel no one had asked him the dreaded question, "When are you coming here to settle?" But Halkin is disturbed by this reticence:

> Because there is, or at least should be, an unavoidable tension in the relationship between an Israeli and a Diaspora Jew, a relationship which is ideally an adversary one since the Israeli is living in a community of faith which holds that it alone is the natural place for a Jew to live, and this tension can only be resolved by dealing with it directly. A Diaspora Jew and an Israeli can talk to each other as ordinary human beings about anything they wish—about the Palestinian question, or the high price of air travel, or the last words of Heidegger, or even the poetry of Yehuda Halevi—but if they are to talk to each other meaningfully as Jews, there is, alas, only one relevant question with which such a conversation can begin, which is the one that no one asked you this summer.

This version of the Zionist faith attributes ideological significance to the ingathering of all Jews in Zion, and considers the Law of Return to be a constantly beckoning duty. Halkin himself threatens the Diaspora with demographic omens of disappearance. Another such Zionist, the Israeli novelist Amos Oz, contrasts Jewish national creativity inside Israel with the absence of such creativity elsewhere: Israel is to him the theater of action, the Diaspora merely an audience.

THOUGH you have elected to move to Israel, you never professed *aliyah* as dogma, and I confess that I can't, either. After so many centuries on other continents, a people as adaptive as ours can't suddenly be made to believe that its creative survival is contingent on geography alone. North Americans in particular could never be convinced by an article of faith that is contradicted by their personal experience. Long before the modern Jewish state came into being, the United States Constitution (and, almost to the same degree, the British North America Act governing Canada) promised a home to people of all faiths and nationalities, and the millions of Jews born since then into its freedoms cannot deny their roots in America or their love for their country. If Israel is unquestionably the Jewish homeland, America is as surely a homeland of the Jews—no less than of the resident English, Italians, Irish, Dutch, Africans, or Japanese.

It complicates Zionism to have succeeded in rebuilding the Jewish state only after one third of the Jews had been killed and another third had found a trusted home. But of the two complications, only the first was fatal. No people with a will to live ever perished through surfeit of opportunity.

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Halkin is right about the unavoidable tension in the relationship between an Israeli and a Diaspora Jew, and I share his desire to deal with it directly. But the source of tension is less metaphysical or ideological than practical. Israel is the only modern country still rejected by all but one of its neighbors after forty years. After five major wars its existence is still a subject of debate. One group of Jews bears the brunt of this anti-Jewish assault; the other does not. Some day, when the Jewish homeland is as unthreatened as Canada, your presence in the one place or the other would matter no more than does the presence or absence of any average Canadian in Canada. Until that time, Jewish bodies have to be counted, and the Law of Return can be read as a summons. Your arrival in Israel with two sons and two daughters should cheer every Israeli you meet, even one who complains that your rights as a newcomer unfairly exceed his. The baker and grocer will be more grateful for your sheer presence than for your patronage.

I don't mean to trivialize the large questions of Jewish destiny or the Jewish people. Yet the problems of a political state are finite, and separate from the familial trauma of its inhabitants. The guilt incurred by the Israeli who leaves his country today is not a function of his Jewishness or even of his Zionism but of the siege that encircles his fellow citizens: his departure increases, psychologically and numerically, their burden of defense.

When one of our colleagues at McGill, Danny S., an Israeli, flew back to join his unit during the Yom Kippur War, he sent us a postcard signed, "The Fist of the Jewish People." Afterward he apologized to us for the melodrama, and for the innuendo of resentment, but the resentment was honest. For most of the time he was among us we spoke, like the people in Halkin's passage, about Samuel Beckett and the structure of biblical narrative. And why not, since these were our common concerns as teachers of literature? By contrast, our Jewish conversations always left something unsaid. I wonder whether the many new institutes and centers for Israel-Diaspora dialogue aren't meant to obscure the question Halkin rightly says we should be asking: Who is going to Israel to settle?

If I may take up the language of your letter for one last time, I would liken the Jews to a family some of whose children stay home to care for mother and father while others go off on their own. (So young a country could perhaps be more appropriately represented as our common child, but its experience, if not its chronological age, permits my use of this traditional comparison.) As long as the parents are healthy, the children at a distance can discharge their share of responsibility by sending money as it is needed and by coming to visit. Their absence does not deprive their parents of them to any greater degree than it deprives them of their parents.

But if the parents are plagued by illness the balance of family life changes. Those at home are forever on guard. They spend days at the doctor's, in the hospital, at a bedside. All their plans for tomorrow and next week are nervous and contingent. The interruptions to their work and love affairs and thoughts are bound to stir resentment, the longing to be released. Even when the ailing parents enjoy a few good days in succession, the relief is only temporary.

What of those at a distance? Their sympathetic letters are accompanied by larger sums to help defray the mounting costs of nursing care. On their frequent visits they may even express regret and remorse at being so far removed from the heart of the family. But given the choice, they would prefer to stay away and let other members of the family continue to perform the required duties.

The Jewish mother-and-fatherland suffers from a new strain of an ancient illness that has destroyed too many Jewish communities in the past. We all dream of a cure or, short of that, of long periods of remission. In the meantime, however, those in Israel and those not in Israel know which of them carries the heavier share of the filial burden, and nothing that we say to one another can mitigate that knowledge.

It occurs to me as I spin out my metaphor that you left to settle in Israel only after both your parents died—and that you had tended your father through his final two years. I'm left to wonder how deeply our family feeling determines our national obligations, and what will happen to "the Jews" now that families have become such puny structures. But I will have to wonder a little longer. My own family gathers tonight, and I must set the table.

WITH LOVE—

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Reclaiming the Catholic Heritage

Anne Roche Muggeridge

IN THE late 1970's, one of my sons, during a Canadian Remembrance Day (Veterans' Day in the U.S.) assembly in a Catholic high school run by the Holy Cross Fathers, was exhorted by his young priest-teacher, "If they draft you, don't go! And if they force you to go, don't fight!" When I was a student in a convent school during World War II, we used to recite "In Flanders Fields" during *our* Remembrance Day service: "Take up our quarrel with the foe! / To you from failing hands we throw / The torch; be yours to hold it high. / If ye break faith with us who die / We shall not sleep, though poppies grow / In Flanders fields." We were told that soldiers who made "the Supreme Sacrifice" went straight to heaven. My Catholic school was so patriotic that I was strapped twice on each hand for not turning up to march in school uniform with my class to the town flagstaff for a civic celebration of Victory in Europe. But that was the bad old Church at war and peace. In the reformed Church, we arrange these things differently.

My generation of Catholic students was taught that Communism (we called it Godless Communism) was the enemy of God and man. The formative political experience of our lives was the Hungarian Revolution of 1956. We revered as heroes and martyrs Cardinal Joszef Mindszenty, who had been imprisoned by the Communist regime, and the Hungarian Communist officer Pal Maleter, who had been sent to disarm the rebels but who joined the Revolution instead. Sunday mass was followed by recitation of the Prayers for the Conversion of Russia which end with the magnificent invocation: "Blessed Michael the Archangel! Defend us in the day of battle! Be our safeguard against the wickedness and snares of the Enemy. Rebuke him, O God, we humbly pray! and do thou, O Prince of the Heavenly Host, thrust back into Hell Satan and all other evil spirits who wander through the world seeking the ruin of souls." Pius XI, author of a 1937 encyclical, *On Atheistic Communism*, who mandated these prayers, did not intend the identification of the devil with the Soviet Union to be taken metaphorically. A resolute way, certainly, to begin the week. In 1964, when the optimistic spirit of Vatican II was at its strongest, Paul VI, as a gesture of good will in the Vatican's new policy of *Ostpolitik*, forbade the recitation of these prayers.

My children face a changed ideological climate. The single official *Canadian Catechism*, in a lesson on "children of the world," has a picture and story of a Russian girl (engaging smile, long braids, smart uniform dress) who belongs to the Soviet youth group, the Young Pioneers. The *Catechism* obviously considers the Young Pioneers to be the equivalent of the Girl Scouts and not, as it actually is, the equivalent of the Hitler Youth. The same *Catechism* includes a lesson which accepts the Communist version of the Spanish Civil War.

When World War II broke out, Newfoundland, where I lived, was still a British colony. We used to pray for America to enter the war, and we took its entry on December 7, 1941, which coincided with the Vigil of the great feast of the Immaculate Conception of the Virgin Mary, as a sign of heavenly favor. Now, however, Catholic schools seem to have adopted the Young Pioneers' low opinion of the United States. In the early 1980's a second son of mine, at the same Catholic high school, faced a "theology" test on which all the questions were of the same political coloration as the following: "The fact that the CIA has access to over two hundred newspapers suggests what about their intentions in world affairs?" (Deciding that there was nowhere to get a noncommittal grip on such question-begging ideological posers, he chose to answer in a way that amounted to a deliberate flunking of the "theology" unit of his compulsory religion course: "The fact that the CIA has access to over two hundred newspapers suggests that the CIA knows that the worst thing that can happen to people is to fall into the hands of the Communists and that the CIA wishes to help prevent this awful fate.")

Since Catholic schools reflect immediately and

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exactly what the hierarchy is thinking—or, to speak more accurately, what the hierarchy's theological bureaucrats, the powerful "parallel hierarchy," are thinking—the view from the strategic promontory of Catholic education upon the ideological battle being waged for the soul of the West, and in particular for the soul of the Americas, leads one to a startling conclusion: the Catholic Church has changed sides in the war.

THIS IS not to say that the older Catholic tradition has altogether disappeared. Until recently, however, the serious and eloquent case being mounted for that tradition has been for the most part confined to a few conservative Catholic journals and presses, which, in effect, has meant preaching to the converted. The appearance of new books by two Catholic intellectuals is a welcome sign that this situation, destructive both for Catholicism and for the society in which it sojourns, has begun to change.

The first, *Tranquillitas Ordinis*: *The Present Failure and Future Promise of American Catholic Thought on War and Peace*, by George Weigel,* president of the James Madison Foundation in Washington, is, for once, exactly what one of its jacket comments claims: "an intellectual and religious event" (Richard John Neuhaus). It is an event twice over: because it is the first serious defense in twenty years of the traditional Catholic theory of the just war, and because it offers a major new reinterpretation and synthesis of the heritage of Catholic thought on war and peace and the just society. The fact that it is published by Oxford University Press should ensure that its influence is not limited to the already converted, and the fact that it was immediately trashed in the New York *Times Book Review* by a leading Catholic establishment intellectual (Jay Dolan) means that Weigel's daring offensive is being taken seriously.

Weigel argues three theses: that there is a heritage of Catholic thought on war and peace capable of dealing with the threats of modern war and totalitarianism; that its abandonment after Vatican II by "the most influential sectors of the American Catholic elite" has impoverished the public debate on war and peace; and that a reclamation and expansion of the Catholic heritage in the light of the American Catholic experience is crucial for the securing of world peace and freedom.

Tranquillitas Ordinis begins with a long examination of the Catholic heritage, from St. Augustine in the fourth century to John Courtney Murray in the 20th. Augustine regarded the state as both punishment and remedy for orginal sin. The state's duty was to maintain *tranquillitas ordinis*, the tranquillity of order, which was Augustine's definition of peace and the necessary condition for virtuous public life. Given original sin, war was inevitable, but (like the state itself) it was to be seen as God's punishment and remedy for injustice. Pacifism, on the other hand, was a concession to evil and injustice. Moral reasoning determined which wars were "just" and therefore permissible.

Augustine established the criteria for the just war: it must have a just cause, e.g., resistance to aggression, repair of grave wrongs; it must be declared by the legitimate authority; it must be waged with a right intention—not for glory or spoils but to defend the innocent and punish the wicked; there must be no wanton violence, e.g., revenge killings, atrocities, looting, massacre, rape, burning. "We go to war to gain peace," Augustine wrote, and St. Thomas Aquinas echoed him. Aquinas and other medieval theologians refined and expanded Augustine's criteria, the addition most relevant to the present nuclear-age debate being that of proportionality: the good to be attained by going to war must be reasonably supposed to outweigh the certain evils.

But the most important contribution of medieval thought was the development of the concept of *tranquillitas ordinis*. Aquinas saw the state as "natural" rather than as "remedial," and oriented by its nature to the common good of its citizens, that is, the life of virtue, of which political community is a part. War, though likely, was no longer thought to be inevitable. The business of government was peace, the ordering of affairs so as to help man achieve his end, eternal unity with God. Therefore, the ruler possessed legitimate legislative power only insofar as he stood in the place of the people. Government without the consent of the governed was tyranny.

Weigel finds in Aquinas's constitutionalism "the roots of a Catholic theory of democratic governance." *Tranquillitas ordinis*, no longer a static concept, means "the peace of dynamic, rightly ordered political community." The body of Catholic reflection on limited government, government by popular consent, the common good, the just war, pluralism, subsidiarity, personalism, natural law, and natural right constitutes, he believes, a developed "theology of peace."

Weigel's revisionist approach to classic Catholic political philosophy is novel, certainly, but this startled traditionalist found it, upon close, fascinated examination, perfectly valid and acceptable. It is true that the Catholic theology of peace exists in a more diffuse and less immediately accessible form than the theology of war. This is partly because it was the work of many theologians instead of one particular genius like Augustine. Also, it is the fruit of a different kind of meditation. War, except in the most carnivorous societies, is the exceptional political event; Augustine's clear rules were designed for emergency use only. The just-war criteria have the same essential and limited function as the fire-alarm box in

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a public building which instructs one to Break Glass And Pull Handle In Case Of Fire, and they are symbolic of the same determination to preserve whatever can be preserved of right public order.

Peace, by contrast, the ordinary political mode for most societies, is a long, ruminative, pluralistic, organic process, not easily reducible to rules. We do not have posted, alongside the fire-alarm instructions, a list of regulations on how the marriages of the people who work in the building are to be preserved, or their working relationships made more harmonious. Nevertheless, defining the Catholic heritage of political thought as a theology of peace rather than as a theology of war is more than acceptable; it is heartening and revivifying, for it permits a dynamic and positive approach to our political problems in place of the present paralyzed, negative attitude.

FAR more controversial, for traditionalists and dissenters alike, is Weigel's interpretation of the history of the relationship of American Catholicism with American democracy. It is a standard assertion of post-Vatican II historiography that American Catholicism has been too uncritically supportive of all U.S. military and foreign policy, and that this subservient moral posture has weakened the "prophetic role" of the hierarchy and compromised the integrity of the Gospel. (Philip Berrigan, while still a priest, adopted the "prophetic role" and called his Church "a whore.")

Weigel agrees that there has been—until the 60's and 70's—"a consistent pattern of official Catholic support" for American administrations, but he argues that this support derived not from the anxious desire of a minority to disarm the prejudices of the majority, but from a principled and original understanding of the Catholic tradition in the American situation. Since peace in rightly ordered political community is "the only this-worldly alternative to war" and the necessary condition to leading the virtuous public life, then Catholic reasoning must determine what kind of government will come closest to providing "right order." The American Bishops decided in favor of the American democratic experiment as the political system which most fully incarnated the Catholic theology of *tranquillitas ordinis*. From the founding of the American hierarchy—Bishop John Carroll was the cousin of Charles Carroll, a signer of the Declaration of Independence—through a succession of Provincial Councils of Baltimore in the 19th century, and up through World War II and beyond, official American Catholicism professed its philosophical and practical support of what the Jesuit John Courtney Murray called "the American Proposition."

During the 1950's, in a period of profound Catholic disappointment at the failure of American foreign policy to push back Communism, Murray, whom Weigel calls, with justice, the greatest public theologian in American Catholic history, set out to "test" the American Proposition for objective soundness. In his great work *We Hold These Truths* Murray developed a "new hermeneutic" of American democracy in the light of American Catholic experience. Not only, he argued, were the moral roots of American democracy to be found in the classic Catholic philosophical heritage; but also, in the American political experiment, for the first time in history constitutionalism and religious and political freedom were not scholastic theories but lived realities.

The influence of Murray's thought was most powerfully evident in the Second Vatican Council's December 7, 1965 declaration *Dignitatis Humanae*, "On the Right of the Person and of Communities to Social and Civil Freedom in Matters Religious." Two years after *Dignitatis Humanae* Murray was dead, however, and his work with him. In the twenty years since his death, Weigel documents, American Catholic elites have devoted their energies not to a reclamation of the American Proposition in the light of Murray's understanding of the classic Catholic heritage, but to the repudiation and abandonment of both proposition and heritage. A revolutionary shift has taken place in the way American Catholic intellectuals understand the nature of America itself and of its role in world affairs.

The shift informs the political thought of American Catholicism at the highest level of the leadership. Weigel quotes statements of Raymond G. Hunthausen, Archbishop of Seattle, a leading episcopal critic of U.S. deterrence strategy. In a June 1981 address, Archbishop Hunthausen claimed that America's "willingness to destroy life everywhere on this earth, for the sake of our security as Americans, is at the root of many other terrible events in our country." Of the Trident nuclear submarines, based in his diocese, he said: "And when crimes are being prepared in our name, we must speak plainly. I say with a deep consciousness of these words that Trident is the Auschwitz of Puget Sound." He urged the withholding of income taxes in protest against America's "race for nuclear supremacy"; later, he followed his own advice.

Archbishop Hunthausen was a prime mover in the preparation of the American Bishops' 1983 pastoral letter, "The Challenge of Peace," which Weigel judges to be a "decisive moment" in the abandonment of the classic Catholic theology of peace. Adherence to the tradition's wider framework of moral realism would, he argues, have made the bishops less vulnerable to contemporary intellectual currents and emotions and avoided what he sees as the principal deficiencies of the letter: its detachment of the problem of nuclear weapons from the political context of their uses;

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the notion that sheer physical survival is the highest goal; the relativizing of the totalitarian dimension of the problem; the formulation of political problems and solutions in eschatological and apocalyptic language.

Weigel's third thesis, which follows from all this, is that a Church which truly desires to be at the service of peace must reclaim and expand its heritage of moral realism. "American Catholicism needs not to be depoliticized so much as repoliticized," he writes, through a shift back to understanding war and peace in political rather than in psychological and/or biblical categories. "Politics is a moral necessity because it is the civic expression of incarnational humanism in an always conflicted world."

BEGINNING in Vatican II with the call of *Gaudium et Spes* for Catholics to think with "an entirely new attitude" about the problem of war, the Catholic Church has also preached the absolute linkage of peace with "justice." "If you want peace, work for justice," Paul VI said. But how is one to understand justice? At a 1971 Synod, the Church proposed a maximalist understanding: justice means the "liberation" of the human race "from every oppressive situation." The sober realism of the older, Augustinian-Thomistic tradition knew that such absolute "liberation" could not happen here on earth, and that if we had to wait for peace until every injustice were removed, then we could never have peace. But sobriety was not a distinguishing characteristic of the famous "Spirit of Vatican II." In the climate of euphoric expectation generated in the Council, "building the kingdom" (the title of a prescribed religion text my children studied) here and now came to seem the possible and necessary task of contemporary Catholicism.

The present Catholic climate is the worst possible one in which to address the question of what political form can best bring about reform and best embody *tranquillitas ordinis* for our time. Yet the Church's own formulation of the problem of peace in terms of liberation from oppression makes it utterly imperative that we ask of any proposed system the fundamental question: Will it liberate? This question is the title and subject of the second work under consideration, Michael Novak's study of "liberation theology."*

Michael Novak has for some time been the major contributor to the project of reclaiming the Catholic heritage of political philosophy, at least in the world outside the house journals of Catholic orthodoxy. (This has not always been the case; Novak is himself a fairly recent convert to the moderate realism of the Catholic tradition. "I was forced to see," he writes in his 1983 memoir *Confession of a Catholic*, "that many of my earlier prejudices and inclinations were out of touch with reality.") In *Will It Liberate?* he calls for "strenuous argument," based on empirical tests among Americans both North and South, to determine which theology will best bring about liberation for the poor and oppressed. The answers to such arguments, he writes, will constitute a "theology of the Americas."

Novak says that there are at present two American theologies of liberation. The one everyone is talking about, Latin American liberation theology, has divided the region's hierarchies and exercised the Vatican, even though it exists at present more in books—such as Gustavo Gutierrez's *A Theology of Liberation*, Jean Luis Segundo's *A Theology for Artisans of a New Humanity*, Hugo Assman's *Theology for a Nomad Church*, José Miranda's *Communism in the Bible*—than in reality. The other theology, North American "democratic capitalism," as Novak has named it, exists, like the Catholic theology of peace, far more powerfully in reality, in the institutions, practices, and habits of American daily life, than in books.

Latin American liberation theology, in Novak's definition, "is a method of defining Christian faith in the political context of underdevelopment, in a side-choosing spirit committed to action." Liberation, in this context, means throwing off the domination of capitalism, and specifically, of the United States of America. The repudiation of Western capitalist democracy leads liberation theology to ground its critique of society in a Marxist analysis. Although liberation theologians reject Marxism's atheism and materialism, they accept its other key points: the view of history as the class struggle; the violent character and utopian outcome of the struggle; the abolition of private property; and an epistemology which identifies truth with the cause of a particular social class in history. Novak traces these Marxist elements in the work of leading Latin American theologians.

Both democratic capitalism and liberation theology profess "an option for the poor," a famous inclination the Catholic Church is said to have discovered in itself only after the Second Vatican Council. The question is, which "option" will actually result in lifting the poor out of poverty. Novak argues that Latin American liberation theology cannot do this because of a missing link in its intellectual system—it has no concrete vision of political economy.

Latin American liberation theologians operate not from a realist epistemology but from a mythology and a demonology. They say: we are the oppressed and others are the oppressors. As Novak points out, this first step shifts responsibility for the condition of their society from themselves to others, leads them to picture life as a continu-

* *Will It Liberate?*, Paulist Press, 311 pp., $14.95.

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ous war against oppressors, and interprets history as the class struggle. Empirical realities are not allowed to impinge upon this dramatic vision.

THE great novelty and attraction of liberation theology is the way in which it uses Scripture as a metaphor for the class struggle. Thus, the Exodus becomes the liberation of the poor from capitalism, and the *Magnificat* is rewritten (as lately by Sister Theresa Kane) as a feminist manifesto. In this "radical politicization of the affirmations of the faith," in Cardinal Ratzinger's words, participation in the class war becomes "a requirement of charity itself." I shall give just one example from my own experience, a "liturgy" for Third World Solidarity Day, April 5, 1987, designed for the popular Catholic Lenten devotion, the Way of the Cross. A direct translation from a Brazilian Lenten Campaign in 1980, first published in English by the Catholic Fund for Overseas Development in England, its fifteen "Stations of the Cross" purport to be drawn from real life. The first "Station," prefaced by a drawing of a Brazilian peasant nailed to a crucifix-shaped cactus, is typical of the whole:

> Jesus is sentenced to death. The Migrant gives his land back.
> Reader 1: Joao Camara had many peasants living on his land in the Northeast of Brazil—one day he took the land away from them and offered them only 35 cruzeiros ($24) in return. The peasants could not oppose him so they left with their small sum of money.
> Reader 2: The people have worked this land all their lives but as soon as the landowner does not need them any more they are thrown off their land. They have no option but to go to the cities and build themselves a shack on the outskirts.
> Prayer (all):
> Oh Lord, we read in Genesis: "The earth will be for all of you: Live there and work there and own it." Make it possible for us to acquire our own piece of land so that we may earn our bread with dignity.

This "liturgy" hits all the bases, including the evils of powdered infant milk formula, in the course of its fifteen "stations." As mythology, the liturgy works successfully on the emotions, but as economic and political analysis it is woefully inadequate. For one thing, it mistakes the enemy. The economic situation pictured above, formulaic in the literature of liberation theology, is obviously not capitalist but pre-capitalist.

Novak, indeed, claims that there is not a single capitalist economy in Latin America. Everywhere the state plays a disproportionately large part in the economic activity of the people, the middle class is small, and there is no machinery to enable small entrepreneurs to get into the economic system. Novak argues, with convincing evidence from other Third World countries lately miserably poor and now economically robust, that the kind of revolution needed in Latin America is not the revolution heralded by liberation theology but the capitalist transformation of the continent's decayed feudal and mercantilist systems. He boldly challenges proponents of liberation theology to test their basic constructs against the record of democratic capitalism, which has succeeded in lifting up tens of millions of the poor.

THE majority of Catholic Americans outside the academy and the Church bureaucracy still feel as strongly as Murray did, and as Weigel and Novak do, about the compatibility of America and Catholicism. Indeed, the more orthodox a Catholic is, the more patriotic he is, and the more supportive of traditional American political and moral principles. Ironically, it is in part the coincidence of Catholic orthodoxy and genuine piety with "Americanism" which has led many Catholics like myself, brought up in the European tradition of suspicion toward liberal democracy, to change our minds, as Michael Novak has changed his, about the American experiment. First of all, because we saw that the Catholic faith had not been denatured or degraded by America but had remained pure and intense, and, as de Tocqueville noticed, had prospered in the most democratic country in the world more than anywhere else. Second, because we became convinced, in large part by the evidence of our own families' rapid rise from immigrant poverty, that liberal democratic capitalism is the most successful and most moral method of raising the poor from poverty and of achieving international peace and freedom.

Why then have America's Catholic elites, themselves recently so loyal, suddenly defected? George Weigel warns against the temptation to credit—or blame—Vatican II, which he invokes as "a temporal reference, not as an explanatory principle." It is true that the Council reaffirmed all traditional Catholic doctrine, including the prohibition of artificial birth control, and gave no mandate for the sweeping cultural revolution which wiped out traditional Catholicism after it. Yet it is also true that very many of the American theologians and lay intellectuals who went into the Council firmly orthodox came out of it dissenters. (Significantly, both Weigel and Novak are in this respect liberal Catholics; both reject, for instance, the traditionalist sexual teaching of *Humanae Vitae*, which is *the* post-Vatican II touchstone of orthodoxy.)

Vatican II, though not in itself a revolutionary event, created a climate conducive to radical change and provided a window of opportunity which allowed radical ideas, suppressed in the Church since the Vatican's condemnation of modernism at the end of the 19th century, to surface in respectable Catholic discourse. The

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emerging theological revolution failed to implant more than hints and ambiguities—"certain formulations with a modern tendency," as the radical theologian Edward Schillebeeckx put it—in the actual documents of Vatican II, but it invented the "spirit of Vatican II," in whose light the "letter" has since been transcended and reinterpreted.

Thus by now many Catholic intellectuals, lay and religious, reject the Church's account of truth as unchanging and universally binding; for them, truth is relative, historically conditioned, and in the province of private judgment. They have become the de-facto government at every level of policy-making, administration, and education in the national Churches. And this rebellion against the Catholic principle of authority extends from religion to politics. A revolutionary consciousness is at work in the local churches, explicitly in countries such as Nicaragua, less explicitly in Canada and the United States, though there too most Catholic intellectuals have also adopted an adversary position toward their own national government.

It is important to realize that Catholics are not engaged merely in a scholastic dispute over how best to express for modern times doctrines they still hold in common. The present quarrel is about cosmology. Not, as in the old cliché, about how many angels can stand on the head of a pin, but about whether there are angels to stand on pins or on anything else—whether, that is, there is anything supernatural, whether human life should remove itself from beneath the jurisdiction of the sacred, whether human actions have eternal consequences, whether salvation is of this world.

When the present-day Christian (or Jew) chooses sides in the debate on war and peace, he is choosing not a technology but a theology (and therefore a cosmology). It is a package deal, a fact brought forcefully home to me by the "peace movement." In 1984 I covered a large "peace march" in Toronto in which clean-cut kids from Neil McNeil High School, looking in their trim uniforms typical of a more disciplined Catholic era, marched with banners quoting Pope Paul VI—("Youth Have The Right To A Peaceful Future") in company with: Catholics for Social Change, Pax Christi, Regis College (Jesuits), and a group of robed and sandaled Franciscans; *and* with Canadian Action for Nicaragua Solidarity Bloc, Revolutionary Workers League, Canadian Palestinian Solidarity Committee, Animal Rights, Communist Party of Canada, El Salvador-FMLN-FDR, Coalition for Liberalization of Abortion Rights, Abortion Clinics, Gay/Lesbian Alliance, Pink Ink, Lesbian/Gay Liberation, Young Communist League, League of Arab Democrats, Seedlings for Peace, and a huge leering effigy of Ronald Reagan holding a sign, "No To Reagan And His Bullshit!"

What in God's name, I wondered in a newspaper report I wrote at the time, were Catholics doing in that extraordinary company? The answer came from Ted Schmidt, founder of Teachers for Social Justice and head of religion at Neil McNeil, who wrote the editor: "Our school is a pro-life school and if gays, lesbians, and Communists wish to walk for life on this planet too, more power to them." More power to them is exactly what is going to result from such Catholic behavior.

It would be too sweeping to claim that most Catholic intellectuals have lost their faith in the course of the cultural revolution which has shattered Catholic society, but it is fair to argue, with reference to their public statements and actions, that most of them have lost *some* of their Catholic faith. The Church is thus in a bad way. Yet fortunately, not only for the Church itself but for the political community as a whole, the examples of Weigel and Novak attest that it cannot yet be written off. Even though there is no escaping the fact that Weigel and Novak belong to what is still a small minority among Catholic intellectuals, their work, fresh, exciting, and intellectually satisfying, is a signal that the unique, powerful way of looking at existence which used to be called, without an adjective, Catholicism, may have regained some of its wonted confidence and begun a counter-offensive.

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The Succession

A Story

Allegra Goodman

RABBI Everett Siegel walks stealthily through the mall carrying a Woolworth's shopping bag. Tall and stout, he cannot hope to hide in the crowd of young mothers and strollers. If he is to avoid recognition he must rely on speed, and so he trots along puffing with little quick steps. He is nearly out the door when George Kugel runs up calling, "Rabbi! What are you doing in Hawaii Kai?" Siegel stops and holds his shopping bag uncomfortably. "Well, George," he counters, "what are you doing with your Friday nights? You should come back to the temple."

"Ha!" George laughs.

Martin Buber Temple stands in one of Honolulu's oldest neighborhoods. Old Pali Road is no longer residential. Its 1930's colonial mansions now fly the consular flags of Japan and Indonesia and the King of Tonga. Outnumbering even the consulates are churches and shrines: Methodist, Greek Orthodox, Episcopalian, and Shinto. Next door to Martin Buber the Cochran estate houses the Kwan Yin Temple and seminary. A two-storey gilt statue of Kwan Yin-Boddhisatva beckons serenely in several directions, caressing the Cochran garden with the sinuous shadows of her many arms. John and Susan Cochran lie in the Congregationalist churchyard with their son-in-law Prince Pauahi. It was their great-grandchildren who converted the old Mission House into the Cochran estate. Now the white pavilions ring with temple bells. As John and Susan had always hoped, the house of their descendants remains a house of prayer.

It was the bells that caused architect George Kugel to resign from Martin Buber Temple. Kugel says he left MBT because he underwent a personal crisis. He needed to become Unitarian in order to come to terms with his Jewish roots. But this is not the real reason Kugel left. The main reason is that the board grossly mismanages the development of MBT property. Kugel hears the bells of the Kwan Yin Temple and is overcome with aggravation that the MBT board didn't listen to him back in '71 and buy the Cochran estate when it came on the market for $50,000.

Even without the estate, MBT is a large temple. "We're not talking size," Kugel still argues, "we're talking market potential." In any case, MBT presents a noble modern profile on Old Pali Road. Kugel designed the sanctuary. But contractors slapped together the religious-school buildings. This was the last straw. Kugel submitted a three-page letter of resignation to the president. It began with cool formality, but warmed at the end. The architect wrote: "I am an artist. I pour out my soul in my work. When you massacre such work, you spit on my soul." He left while the Samoan construction team built a lava rock wall without fitting the rocks together. They spray-painted between the rocks to disguise their white mortar in black shadows. Kugel did not return in 1979 to see the new rust carpet in the sanctuary or the beanbags that replaced the conference table in the library. Years later the earth-tone chairs still stand, as do the coarse lithographs of the Old Country and the abstract sculpture that is said by some to look like a cross. Kugel refuses all conciliatory offers. "I sweated blood for this building," he tells Rabbi Siegel. "You don't know what it does to me when I see those add-ons. This design was an original. This was my plan."

"What can I tell you?" the rabbi answers in his deep mournful voice. "I also had a plan."

Everett Siegel, Rabbi Emeritus, has served MBT for a quarter-century. He is known for infusing Friday night services with pathos and dignity. He still presides in black robes, and his deep tones fill the sanctuary even when he turns his back to the congregation to lift the holy scrolls. He has a special microphone built into the ark. Siegel's sermons are long, and many find them deeply moving. When Dr. Sugarman came to say *Yizkor*, the prayer of remembrance, for his first wife, the new Mrs. Sugarman was moved to tears by the rabbi's words. Siegel does, in truth, have a gift for speaking to the bereaved. His secret is that he does not try to comfort or give hope. Instead he gives eloquent voice to the pain and anger of the mourner. He speaks of the injustice of the world, the enormity of personal sorrow, and the everlasting, unhealing scars of grief. He understands that this is what the mourners want: the reassurance that they are inconsolable.

With the passing years, the rabbi has become

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more eloquent. His sermons are longer and more profound. Siegel is a community figure in Honolulu with his work in interfaith relations. He joins priests of Buddhist and Christian sects in ecumenical services. On these occasions with the other religious leaders he officiates in Hawaiian print vestments. He listens to the hymns and mantras sung in turn at Thanksgiving; and, like all the other ministers, the rabbi believes he is Gauguin among strange blessed holy people in their exotic rituals.

Five years ago the MBT Board decided that Rabbi Siegel was old, and before Siegel could resign, he was made emeritus by the congregation's president, Steve Gottlieb. Siegel will never forgive Steve for that. Next the board conducted a national search for a rabbi who would be good with young people. They made an offer to the third-choice applicant because the first and second choices would never come to Hawaii, and if they did, they would never stay. "Look," Gottlieb reasoned, "we're not going to get Stephen S. Wise out here, so don't push it."

And so today, Rabbi Barry Liebowitz presides at Elijah Oshin's bar mitzvah. Rabbi Siegel watches from his place of honor on the pulpit with Gottlieb and Betsy Sugarman, the Sisterhood president. The altar rises in flaming tropical flowers, anthuriums, proteas, orchids, and birds of paradise. The choir soloist sings to soft organ accompaniment while the congregation stands in silent meditation. Gottlieb glances at his gold pavé diamond watch. The new rabbi nods to signal the end of meditation, but he can't get the organist's attention, and so the music rolls on for several more minutes while the friends and family of the Oshins shift from one foot to the other. Finally the organist notices Rabbi Leibowitz and resolves his last chord. Liebowitz is thirty-one years old. He has light brown hair and a limp moustache. He seems short with his slight build and tight, bent shoulders.

Rabbi Siegel leans forward, adjusting his legs uncomfortably. He is keenly interested in the performance of the young rabbi. Over the years, Siegel has become known for his words on the occasion of bar mitzvahs. He speaks for at least half an hour, developing plays on the youth's name, elaborate metaphors about the future, the planet, love and life. His homilies have been collected and published in the volume, *On This Your Bar Mitzvah Day*. Siegel knows that Liebowitz could never provide sermons of this calibre. But Liebowitz doesn't even try! He lays his hands on the head of the Oshin boy and whispers something to him away from the microphone so no one else can hear.

While Mrs. Sugarman is presenting the Sisterhood kiddush cup, Siegel leans over in his chair and glares at Liebowitz. "No sermon?" Siegel asks.

Liebowitz smiles quickly. "I always talk to the bar mitzvah boy instead because it's really his day. I mean, this is his experience; it's not for the parents."

Siegel knits his brow and declares, "Young man, you are mistaken."

Siegel feels like a black cloud among the celebrants at the reception. How many of these people even know he is the rabbi? The social hall is bright with expensive tropical clothes: muumuus from Carol and Mary, Reyn's subtly patterned reverse print aloha shirts. The elegant set stand apart in darker clothes. This may be Hawaii, but Mrs. Steve Gottlieb will never wear white shoes in February. Siegel moves his lips in silent argument as he spreads cream cheese on a whole wheat bagel. These people don't remember what it was like before Hawaiian Bagel opened. Transients is what they are. The overflow from California. They come in and push out the people who worked and built for twenty years.

Siegel leaves the temple and walks outside through the packed parking lot. Since the space reserved for the rabbi now belongs to Liebowitz and his Mazda he has to walk all the way down to the Kwan Yin Temple to retrieve his gray Lincoln, parked under a dark banyan tree that drops sticky berries and the mess of mynah birds.

Rabbi Siegel lives with his wife Grete in an olive drab apartment building with a view of the Ala Wai Canal: canoe teams paddling on the dark water, tourist couples in their matching aloha wear, local kids fishing for tilapia, deep sunsets, a symphony cellist practicing outside. Living above all this, the Siegels don't often look out the window.

Grete gives Siegel an appraising look as he walks in. She has a face much given to appraising, pricing grey eyes and a sharp nose. "So they ignored you at the service," she says. Grete sets out a plate of Sara Lee cheese danish. She stopped baking years ago when she stopped wearing makeup. "What did I tell you?" she prods. Siegel retreats into his study, but he lives in a non-Austinian world where there are no doors to close. Grete follows him through the open-plan apartment and sits in his desk chair, elbows on his desk. "Why did you go?"

Siegel turns his back and scans the bookshelves. At one time he worked here on a monograph about Martin Buber, but he stopped writing around the time Grete stopped baking. Grete stands up suddenly. "What did they serve? Did they serve you lunch?" She shoos him into the kitchen and hands him two pita halves filled with tuna salad mixed with celery. Siegel is on a diet and always ravenous. He has to eat lunch before he gets home in order to survive, so he usually sneaks to the Woolworth takeout counter and buys Yakitori chicken and veg tempura. Or he hides sushi in the first-aid kit of the car. Now, eyeing the danish on the coffee table, Siegel de-

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cides to stay in the living room to await Grete's afternoon visitor.

Evelyn is Grete's oldest friend in Hawaii. When the two women sit down to talk they speak in their own learned tongue. All common words become technical terms; all names are replaced by pronouns.

"I told her," Grete says, "I said, what do you mean, a bridal shower? Have you seen this boy? Have you met the parents? So she's twenty-nine years old and she's not getting any younger. Who is? But if you ask me, the mistakes in the long term are the ones to worry about. And that kind of boy is long-term trouble."

"Israeli," Evelyn murmurs.

"Exactly what I thought," Grete sparks. And Evelyn nods in mystic understanding.

"Ach!" Grete points to Siegel stealing his second danish. "They retire him and still he's working like a dog. Finally they bring in a new slave and the phone rings even more. I have to fight to get him an hour's rest. They'll kill him yet. He's not going to any meetings this week. I called and canceled." Siegel smiles indulgently at Grete because he knows this infuriates her. "They want to work him into the ground," she fumes. "Even after he retires. What do they give him? The same job at half price. They keep this genius here at half price and they give the little nebbish double the money. Do you know how much this Barry Liebowitz gets? You don't want to know. I hear it's the wife. She demanded $60,000. Salary plus child care. For one *shtikl* kid!"

Evelyn pats her napkin to her lips and says earnestly, "They say he's very good with the young people."

Siegel smiles at Evelyn because she is so beautiful. She has soft white hair and amber-brown eyes. Her hands are delicately wrinkled. After her husband's death she remained a widow for three years. Then Max Engel snapped her up.

GRETE and Evelyn clear the supper dishes and leave together for the Honolulu Symphony. When Grete starts the car, Evelyn automatically takes out her compact and touches up her lipstick. After Evelyn's first husband died, Grete tried to teach her to drive. But Evelyn only cried and took cabs and then remarried. After forty years of marriage she could not learn to see the world from the driver's seat.

They walk from the car to the concert hall. A musician bikes past, violin strapped to his back. "It must be sixty degrees!" Evelyn shivers. She drapes a white cardigan over her shoulders. The evening is so cool some of the women in the concert hall pavilion have an excuse to wear their little fur capes. Grete sniffs at them, the women in their imported silk dresses and their scraps of fur. All claws and tail.

In the concert hall the young rabbi and his wife stand talking to the Gottliebs.

"What we do," the congregation president says rapidly, "we sell all the units before they're built."

"Yes, I see," says Barry. "Very good planning. This sounds very good."

Grete greets Linda maternally. "Well, the young *rebbetzin*," she says.

Linda looks pained. "I am not a *rebbetzin*. I don't derive my identity from my partner's social role."

"How is little Benny?" Evelyn asks soothingly.

"He's great."

"Doing well in school, I'm sure," Grete presses.

"Oh yeah. He's got an amazing vocabulary. We play dictionary games. He just eats them up."

"Oh, you're working with him," Grete says significantly. "Is he reading O.K.?"

"He reads fine," Linda retorts.

Grete draws closer and whispers, "You have to work with them early or any little problems could grow out of proportion. They reverse the letters or have some little eye problem and suddenly dyslexia. You've got to check the eyes all the time. I have a niece legally blind because they didn't start the eye-muscle exercises early enough."

"So this is how she uses all that child care," Grete tells Evelyn as they sit down. "What kind of mother . . . I tell you she doesn't know the meaning of a day's work."

AT HER aerobics class, Linda glows with sweat. "It's the one thing I do for me," she always says. Linda hates aerobics. She takes class three nights a week and leaves their son with the sitter. She could come in the mornings when Benny is at school, but the evening class is much faster-paced. The women are younger, tighter, more driven.

"Higher! Higher! Knees! Get them higher!" gasps the instructor. Linda had a lot of trouble finding a high-powered aerobics class when she got to Hawaii. Out in Mililani Town where Linda lives the women are cows. As for the YMCAs, the women come straight from work and begin the class exhausted. The Honolulu clubs are twice as expensive as New York, but what can you do? So Linda pounds down on the polished floor of The Spa. "Breathe! Breathe!" screams the instructor. The other women gasp like fish, eyes drooping open, dulled with exertion. Linda clenches her teeth and holds her mouth shut as she jumps. In the mirror her determined face is tightlipped, unbreathing except for a slight flaring of the nostrils.

Linda's aerobic glow wears off quickly as she drives back to Mililani, buys milk for the morning, and takes the sitter home. By the time Barry comes home from his board meeting, Linda feels hot and fat again. Looking for a V-8, she has her head in the fridge when Barry comes in. "Hi, sweetie," she calls, facing the milk cartons, Wonder Bread, ketchup bottle, and the bruised eggplant that won't fit in the crisper. Barry sits at

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the kitchen table as Linda announces there is no more V-8. She slams the fridge door shut and starts unloading the dishwasher. Outside, the moths bat against the screen. "I'm bored," she sighs.

Barry looks up, surprised. "But honey, we went to the symphony just last week."

Linda grimaces. "Thanks. I don't need to spend my free time with Grete Siegel and her sicko, hypochondriac advice on childrearing. I'm so *tired* of talking to these women twice my age. Barry, there aren't any fun people here. There's nothing fun to do here. I could die. I run around all day and there's nowhere to go." Tears start in Linda's eyes. "Barry, I'm so *bored*."

Barry reaches over and pats Linda's hand. "That's why Steve Gottlieb's idea sounds so good. He's putting together an investment group for a new development out on Kauai. We could put up money for a condo and make quite a bit renting it out. We'd have a retreat for vacation and even a place for retirement."

"What!" shrieks Linda. "I'm not moving to Kauai. My God, do you remember that weekend we spent? I'm trying to tell you I'm bored. *Bored*. I don't play golf. I don't play tennis. I don't sit on patio chairs. We're not spending our retirement money on Kauai."

"But Linda," Barry says, "I thought you'd love it. I mean, I sort of said yes."

"Did you ask *me*?" Linda hisses. "I'm saying no. We're not doing it!"

Barry's eyes widen. "Baby, I just want you to be happy. I'll call in the morning and pull out."

"Damn well better! Oh, God, I am so. . . . Seriously, I just want to *scream*!"

Barry gives her a soothing look. "I'm hearing you," he says. "I'm hearing you."

"This is not a seminar," Linda screams. "This is not a workship! This is my life. I'm telling you I'm *bored*. You're not getting the message. I am not sixty-five. I am a young person. I need to go out. I need to go dancing. For Christ's sake, we don't even live in Honolulu. We don't go to any clubs."

"I understand," Barry says. "I really do. I think we need to spend more time together. Just the two of us."

Barry phones Gottlieb Investment at nine the next morning. Steve is in conference, but his administrative assistant takes the message.

SUNDAY morning Linda drives Benny to Sunday School. She walks him up to the first-grade classroom and his teacher Becky runs out covered with flour from the challah unit. "Linda!" Becky calls. "Linda, I couldn't reach you yesterday. Rachel Katz's wedding is off. She called me from Israel. Apparently this guy never cared about her as a person."

"Uh huh," says Linda. "So I take it, Rachel isn't coming home."

Becky dusts off her hands. "Oh yeah, she's coming. That's the thing. We've decided to carry on with the shower as a celebration of Rachel."

"Oh, come on," Linda groans. "That's going to be such a downer. Listen, I don't go to wakes."

Becky stares. Screams rise from the classroom. "Linda, the shower was for Rachel anyway. You should follow through. Her self-esteem is probably really low right now. You probably already bought her present. You've got to come. Rachel needs your support."

Linda turns away. "I guess she won't be needing *The Liberation Ketubah*."

"You got her a feminist marriage contract?"

"As I said, she won't be needing it."

AT Rachel Katz's surprise Welcome Home Party, Rachel's mother Ruth sends her daughter's friends out to the pool for chips and dip. Mrs. Katz has always sent Rachel's friends outside to the pool. It makes no difference that the girls are now in their late twenties. Ruth remembers when they were born. Some of them had naming ceremonies at the temple and Ruth took pictures. She is the self-appointed photographer of temple events and has filled many albums. The temple pictures are jumbled in with the Katz family pictures: Rachel naked at three, the Kantor wedding, Tu B'Shvat picnics at the beach, the kids playing volleyball, numerous bar mitzvahs, the dedication of the Sunday School. She's forgotten the occasion for some of the photos. One mysterious black and white print shows what looks like the Sugarmans dressed as each other in a mock wedding ceremony. Dr. Sugarman wears a white veil and Betsy, the Sisterhood president, holds eighteen carrots which symbolize an 18-karat wedding ring.

Ruth Katz ushers her own friends into the living room for drinks. The room is cool and hung with textured wall tapestries Ruth made in her weaving class years ago. Betsy Sugarman sits in a straight chair near the couch. "Ruth!" she exclaims. "I cannot believe that Linda Liebowitz refused to come."

"Believe it," Ruth says. She sits down heavily and her queen-sized muumuu billows around her. "She didn't want to spend on a present now that. . . . No, no, I'm fine. It's my sinuses, you know. I'm trying to cut down on the allergy medicine. I think it's carcinogenic. So no rats have died *yet*. That doesn't mean a thing. Meanwhile I've been taking the stuff for years."

"*Linda*," Betsy clucks. "She should have come for Rachel. It shows selfishness. It makes you wonder about the Liebowitzes."

Ruth shrugs. "They seemed like nice people. It's just at times like this I have to say I miss Rabbi Siegel."

"Siegel could write," Betsy announces. "Siegel could speak. When I heard Siegel at *Yizkor* it was really one of the most moving experiences of my

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life. And when I same back this year—such a change. I was in shock. Liebowitz stands in front of people who are literally grief-stricken and he gives a sermon about how his grandfather died in his sleep and what peace it brought him to see *zaydeh* go at ninety-three with no pain. This is not what a mourning person needs to hear! No person tearing his hair with grief should have to listen to this. The rabbi should be there to comfort, and I felt this year my husband was not comforted when he said Kaddish for his first wife, may she rest in peace. And I'm going to bring this up at the renewal meeting." Betsy folds her arms across her chest.

"Well," Evelyn says in her gentle voice, "they do say he's very good with the young people."

RABBI Liebowitz holds weekly meetings with Yoel Brodsky. Yoel came to Hawaii as a *shaliach*, an emissary sent from Israel to work with American Jews, and never left. Now he is director of the MBT religious school. It seems that every week there's a crisis. Yoel pounds his fist on the rabbi's desk. "Barry, tell me you'll make a stand. The parents are screaming for three days. They want your decision. Should we continue the contraception and safe-sex unit for the confirmation class? Steve Gottlieb is withdrawing his child if you say yes. Irving Glazer is withdrawing the twins if you say no."

"What do you think?" Barry asks.

"My feeling is clear: better to lose one tuition than two. But they want rabbinic opinion. And they want it yesterday! I'm up to here with this."

Liebowitz massages his temples. Finally he looks up at Brodsky and says, "Yoel, I know you're under a lot of pressure. But don't put this on me now. Not now when the whole community is so divided. Don't put this all on me. Please, please don't raise your voice like that. Look, I'll go during juice break and talk to the kids themselves."

The confirmation class lolls under the lychee tree in the courtyard. Their teacher is packing up a clear plastic model of a uterus. Barry squats down among the tenth-graders on the grass. "Hello, people," he says.

"Hi, Barry," the teacher calls out cheerfully.

"People," Barry says, "I hear you've been studying contraception. That's pretty heavy stuff. There's a lot of issues in contraception. What do you think about that?" He pauses. One of the kids blows a condom into a balloon and throws it into the air.

"I want to know your views," says the rabbi. "Because I think you should make decisions and discuss things on your own. How about some ideas. Emily Gottlieb?" he asks, looking around.

"Gong," intones one boy. The kids roll on the ground with laughter.

"Oh, Rabbi," the teacher whispers quickly. "I guess you didn't see the paper. All the Gottliebs have disappeared. The paper says Steve was involved in some kind of investment scheme."

Barry stands white-faced in front of the class. He feels suddenly that they knew all along and watched him sign the check and could have warned him but chose to laugh among themselves as if his fly were open. Why didn't Steve return that call? Steve had his number at home. He must have been gone before Barry even tried to reach him. The rabbi feels hollow, as if Gottlieb had eaten out his stomach along with his savings.

Alone in his study he puts his head down on the cool, smooth desk. He wants to close his eyes and sleep. Curl up alone with his books and never go out again. He looks up at his shelves. *The Book of Job*. He could read that. Or maybe, *When Bad Things Happen to Good People*. Good books about men who face disaster. But nowhere do they answer the darkest question: how do you tell your wife?

"Aw shi-i-it," says Linda, and slams the bedroom door. Barry waits a few minutes and then follows her. She looks like a monster lying on the bed with a white mud mask on her face. Barry stands by the door uncertainly.

"Don't you have anything else to say?" he asks.

"No," Linda snaps.

"Nothing?"

Linda thinks for a moment. Then she adds, "It's your fault."

Barry starts to cry. He looks like a man rocking with silent laughter. "We aren't communicating," Barry says.

Linda sits up suddenly. The white mask is cracked and dry. "I don't know what the hell you thought you were doing with our wedding money," she says, "I don't even want to hear it."

Benny runs down the hall and jumps on the bed. "Ooh, gross," he says, touching Linda's mask.

GRETE examines the Olga brassieres at the Liberty House Foundation Sale. She tests the wire in a solid black one and then systematically empties the bin looking for ecru.

"Grete!" Ruth Katz calls from Sleepwear. Ruth sails out with a pile of nightgowns cresting over her arm. Grete looks up, annoyed, and moves toward Ruth and the less personal zone of bathrobe racks.

"So tell me," Ruth whispers loudly, "any more news on Gottlieb? I'm still in such shock I can't believe it's true."

"I know nothing at all." Grete idly shuffles hangers on the rack. "I never follow the Hawaiian business news."

Ruth smiles. "I take it that's Everett's part of the paper."

Grete's eyes narrow. "We didn't invest in Steve Gottlieb, if that's what you're trying to say."

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"So you know about Barry," Ruth says slyly.

"What about him?"

Ruth leans forward. "He gave Gottlieb twenty-five thousand."

Grete gasps.

Ruth smiles. Gossip well played is a dramatic art. In college she loved the Restoration comedies, "Obviously," Ruth says, "this is confidential."

"Obviously," Grete echoes.

After Grete has phoned Evelyn, Everett comes home. "It's in the papers," he announces. "Gottlieb sells 300 units in a 200-unit building not even built. Then he funnels out all the money from Gottlieb Inc. into a new corporation, declares Gottlieb Inc. bankrupt and leaves town in the dead of night. Our president of MBT. It's a shame to the last good souls in this community. This Sodom. This Gomorrah. This pillar of salt. Even ten worthy men are impossible to find."

Grete closes her eyes and listens to Everett's dark voice. Eloquent he always was. He dictates sermons like a prophet. Even now in the kitchen when Everett speaks, Grete's fingers lift, ready to fly over the typewriter keys. Everett was not made for small talk. His mind is too large and sweeping. His voice is an orator's, ranging for vast audiences. Grete opens her eyes and reports the news on Barry Liebowitz.

Out in Mililani Town, Linda calls to her son, Benny. "Come into the kitchen, punkin. Daddy and I want to talk to you."

Benny plants his fully-jointed Predator doll in the dirt and runs inside growling airplane noises. "I'm a Blackbird," he screams, "fastest plane in the world."

"Do you want some ice cream?" Linda offers.

Benny sits down. "Chocolate," he tells her.

"Chocolate please," Linda adds.

"Ben," Barry starts, but he can't go on.

Linda looks intensely at Benny. Benny looks up and then continues spooning ice cream into his mouth.

"Honey," says Linda, "when people get married they love each other very much and they want to live together all the time. But people change and grow, and sometimes they start needing more space. So we decided Mommy and Benny are going to go see Grandma and Grandpa for a while. I need some space and Daddy needs some space too. That's part of what a divorce is all about. Daddy and Mommy don't want to see each other any more, but that doesn't mean we're ever going to stop loving you. Honey, we know it hurts inside, but we're going to try so hard to make it feel better. You'll see Daddy every summer and you'll see Mommy all year long. Don't you think any of this is your fault. It's just that there's been a change between Daddy and me. That's why Mommy is going to take you to California."

Benny puts down his spoon. "O.K.," he says. "Can I go to Disneyland?"

Linda and Barry stare at each other. "Doesn't he care about us at all?" Linda sobs. "Little beast!"

"He's breaking my heart," Barry whispers.

Linda turns on Benny. "Did you hear that?" she cries. "You're breaking Daddy's heart. And me too. We're just tearing up inside. Can't you see that? We are in such *pain*!"

Linda's voice frightens Benny and he starts to cry. Tears run into the chocolate ice cream on his face. "It's O.K.," Barry says. "Don't be afraid to cry. It's all right to. . . . "

"Shut up," Linda cuts him off. "You've traumatized him enough." She wipes Benny's face and whispers, "Don't cry. Everything's going to be all right. You'll see Grandma and Grandpa and Aunt Laurel and Uncle Matt and. . . ."

Before services on Friday night Evelyn cooks dinner for the Siegels and the Sugarmans. This is Evelyn's first dinner party at her new apartment and she feels claustrophobic in the tiny kitchen. While Evelyn fusses in the kitchen, her husband Max pours himself a generous rye and ginger ale in the living room. Max loves to watch the sun set over the lagoon. That sunset sold him on the apartment. The realtor jabbered about closet space and footage and the fitness spa at the Hawaiian Village, but Max just looked out the window. The water was golden in the warm light and a young couple walked along the sand. They seemed so happy leaning together, feeling the water with bare feet. Max chose the apartment for the view. Sunsets and young love. Even his first wife called him a sentimentalist. He longed for youth even when he was young.

Max owned a business that made nurses' uniforms: white dresses, starched white wimples, white, arch-supporter shoes. The shoes proved unprofitable. He moved to Hawaii when he won a contract with Tripler Hospital. Then, after his wife died, he retired and became Religious Vice President of MBT. That was where he met Evelyn.

When the Sugarmans arrive, Betsy walks into the kitchen and watches Evelyn cook.

"Evelyn, this is beautiful." Betsy purses her lips with pleasure as she nicks a carrot stick from the salad bowl.

"Mm-hm," Evelyn half answers. She dashes out with the butter dish and runs into Dr. Sugarman, who smiles beneficently.

At the table, Grete leaves her salad untouched. Raw vegetables do not agree with her. She nudges Everett to slow him down as he tears into his lettuce like a man who hasn't eaten in weeks.

Everett puts down his fork. "Do you think Liebowitz will get renewed?" he asks.

"No shop talk," Grete commands. "How are the children?" she asks Evelyn.

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Evelyn twists her napkin in her hands. "They're well," she says, "as far as I can tell. Mark doesn't write."

"He called last week," Max reminds her.

"It's not the same," Evelyn says stubbornly. "I can't reread a phone call. I can't hold a phone call. The grandchildren don't know any better, but Mark was brought up differently. He has no excuse. He has a secretary. He could dictate."

Evelyn gets up to refill the wine glasses. She skips her husband. Max looks flushed.

"In the '40's," Grete tells Betsy sternly, "on the base in Hawaii there wasn't any underwater cable connected. We used telegrams."

"I used to write from the ship," Max says, laughing, as if this were an absurd occurrence. "I was in the Navy, you know. I wrote three letters a week. One to my wife, Marjorie, one to my brother, and one to my girlfriend. Once I mailed them together, and I was awfully upset because I couldn't remember which letter I'd sealed in which envelope. Because. . . . "

He trails off and realizes he hadn't meant to tell the story quite that way. He hadn't really meant to tell it at all.

Betsy laughs gaily into the hushed room. "Evelyn," she asks, still laughing, "did Max ever tell you all this before?"

Evelyn shakes her head, bewildered. Later, after services, she feels embarrassed for Max. He brings in a stack of dishes from the table. "I never knew that about you," Evelyn says.

Max smiles dreamily. "Oh, goodness," he sighs, "I haven't thought about it in years. I was so young. We all had no idea whether we'd make it through the war. You have to admit it was a funny thing with those envelopes. Anyhow, it shows I was always absentminded." In the past few years Max has had a small problem with his eyes and he can't control their tearing. He looks as unconcerned as a man chopping onions, with his radiant smile and the tears gathering in his eyes.

BECAUSE the Philippine mahogany conference table was taken from the MBT library during remodeling, the board meets in a classroom belonging to the religious school. Before the scandal, Gottlieb had chaired the meetings, flanked by Max and the Social Vice President, Gary Roth. Gary is a real-estate developer and owns a world-class shrimp farm out on Molokini Island. He bought the farm as a tax loss, but profits doubled when accidental overfeeding produced super-jumbo-sized shrimp. Gary received a Governor's citation for his contribution to Hawaiian aquaculture. After the Gottlieb scandal he was voted in by the temple board as Acting MBT President.

"Old business," Gary announces.

The newly-divorced divorce lawyer, Phil Lieber, rises. "I'm still concerned about the treasurer's report on dues," he says. "The collections situation is out of control and we need to exert some kind of pressure. I'd like to propose public posting of all dues offenders. It works at my club and it should work here. There's no reason I can think of why MBT can't run as smoothly as the Pacific Club."

"Is that a motion?" asks Ruth Katz as she takes minutes.

"Um, yeah, O.K.," says Phil.

"Yes or no?" Ruth demands.

"Yes."

"Seconded."

Ruth records the motion and then says, "O.K., now I have an objection to the motion on the floor."

"Wait," the chair says, "you weren't recognized by the chair."

Ruth shoots back, "Don't try to shut me up, Gary. I've been a member of the temple for twenty-eight years. O.K., this is what I'm trying to say. I personally am not offended by public posting of dues violators, but there are people who might not have the funds to pay because of financial difficulty, and I think they might be embarrassed if they were posted. I mean, we all know who they are, but posting would be a little blatant."

Phil stands up. "Amendment to my motion," he announces. "Those persons who the board feels may be unable to pay up will not be posted. They will be called in for a private session with the subcommittee on finances and we will determine the nature of the financial problem and how much the individual can afford to pay."

The amendment is seconded but the motion is tabled for further discussion. "Time is at a premium," Gary reminds the board. "We move on now to my report on the remodeling problem. I've called several contractors for estimates but nobody will touch the sanctuary because of the height and kind of wood used. Also, the brass fixtures came from the mainland and they can't be repaired locally. We've had to conclude that George Kugel's firm is our only chance if we want to get this renovation done. Now apparently George has some problems with coming to work on the building because of some things that happened years ago. I wasn't here yet, but from what George tells me the temple didn't strike him as a very welcoming place at that time. I think what we need to do is make George feel needed here at MBT, since obviously he is needed. The executive committee did some brainstorming on this and we think the best thing to do is invite him as guest of honor to the annual dinner dance, where we will present him with a lifetime MBT membership and some suitably inscribed gift."

"That's beautiful," murmurs Betsy Sugarman.

"All right," Gary says. "Moving right along. In new business, Rabbi Liebowitz's contract renewal.

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And I'll have to ask for a three-minute limit on individual comments. Also, please remember that our recomendation is subject to a vote of the full membership."

Betsy Sugarman begins. "I find that the rabbi is too inexperienced for the needs of mature people like my husband and myself. Most of you know how strongly I feel about what happened at *Yizkor*." Her voice trembles. "I don't think I can talk about it now. It was . . ." she stops. "Well, you know what I'm trying to say."

"Thank you Betsy," Gary says. "Just to put in my own two cents, I'd like to comment that I enjoy the Hebrew Liebowitz is introducing into the service."

"Now, that's just what I find offensive," Phil cuts in. "This temple is not chartered to serve Israelis. This is an American temple in the American tradition. The services aren't for Hebrew speakers; they're for all members. I'm deeply disturbed by this movement to Hebraize all the prayers until we're muttering by rote. Vatican II got over this sacred language fetish; so can we."

The room hushes as Rabbi Siegel stands up to speak. Gary taps his watch and shows him three fingers before he even starts. "As an ex-officio member of the board," Siegel begins, "I rarely make an appearance. But I feel moved to say a few words about the character of the young man we are considering as a possible spiritual leader of this community. Barry Liebowitz has many fine qualities. The boy has a sweet nature. A gentle manner. But I fear he has also showed many weaknesses in the past year. When we choose a leader of Martin Buber Temple, we choose a Jewish representative and ambassador to the community at large. This was the position I filled in Hawaii for twenty-five years—thirty-one, if we include my time as military chaplain on base during the war when there were so many hardships and shortages. You remember, Evelyn. I like to think that during my time here I gave a little that was unique to Hawaii. After all, few of you remember how different these islands were without. . . ."

Gary taps his watch again.

Siegel rolls on. "I like to think that I never brought shame to this community. I am deeply distressed when I think that my proposed successor might have even a tangential connection with any kind of dealing based on principles of dubious probity."

Ruth Katz rattles the minutes furiously. Liebowitz loses his savings and they're using *that* against him? She feels a sudden sympathy for Barry. Sympathy mixed with guilt. Maybe she shouldn't have said anything to Grete at the Foundation Sale. Poor Barry. Such a victim. And married to such a cat. Linda didn't come through for Rachel after the engagement fizzled, and she didn't come through for her own husband either. Ruth always had a feeling Linda wouldn't make it in Hawaii.

Siegel continues. "At first I dismissed as vicious rumor the very hint that our young rabbi might be involved in a shoddy get-rich-quick scheme. . . ."

"I hope everyone's listening," Ruth snaps, "because I'm not taking this down. With all due respect, Everett, I think this kind of assassination is—"

Gary thumps his gavel. "Everybody just cool down," he says. "Rabbi, I think your time is up, but I know we all thank you for your input. I think right now we need to get back to the bottom line issues. What was the rabbi *hired* for? The young people. This is his forte, and I think we all agree that he's made the new confirmation class the best-attended in years."

THREE days later when the votes are counted, Siegel mopes in his apartment. He looks out the window and watches the after-school canoe teams race down the Ala Wai.

"Grete," he says, "what am I to do with my final years? They've all turned against me. They voted Liebowitz in, and I'm resigning."

Grete throws her arms heavenward. "Thank God!" she exclaims. "They would have killed you if they'd had the chance. You were never meant for a pulpit. You're a genius. You need to write. Beautiful prose like yours, and you wasted it on people who never listened. I've told you a thousand times to finish your article. Listen, no one in the world understands Buber like you. Don't give me that about your final days. You have four grandchildren to visit. My God," Grete breathes, "this is the happiest day of my life."

She picks up the car keys and goes out to look for hazelnuts for a Linzer torte.

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Sid, You Made the Prose Too Thin

Joseph Epstein

A MAN arrives for his first appointment with a psychiatrist, and reports suffering from an unrelenting sadness and gloom. "It's not at all uncommon," the psychiatrist replies, after hearing him out. "I myself often feel depressed. I was feeling so earlier this week, and to fight it off took myself to see the great clown Joey Grimaldi, who's in town with the circus. In the briefest time, while I was watching Grimaldi's wonderful antics, the world suddenly came to seem a lighter and brighter place. My depression seemed to drop away and I left feeling like a new man. Take yourself to see Grimaldi while he's still in town. He'll cheer you up immensely, I promise you." At which point the man sitting opposite the psychiatrist rather sadly replies, "But, doctor, I am Joey Grimaldi."

It is an old story and a familiar one, and it also happens to be the story of the life of S.J. Perelman, who, behind a screen of habitual jokey phrasings, appears to have been dour most of his days and who, in middle age, so dark did his world become, required a regimen of anti-depressant drugs to continue, in the cold word of the clinicians, "functioning." From Pagliacci on, the notion of the clown laughing on the outside and crying within is old enough to constitute a cliché. So well-established is this notion that the modern clown Emmett Kelly actually worked in makeup that can only be described as sadface. Although many a comedian has no doubt been undeceptively shallow, it is now nearly axiomatic that an intelligent man who makes his living from comedy will view the world through sepia-colored glasses.

The question is, does the practice of comedy, with its concentration on the ridiculousness of humankind, turn the comedian dour? Or is it his natural dourness that turns him, in search of relief, to the practice of comedy? That may not exhaust all cases, as the philosophers say, but it can sure exhaust your damn patience, as Perelman might have retorted.

To a natural penchant for gloom S(idney) J(oseph) Perelman brought a relentless suspicion and a propensity for pessimism. This dolorous combination of qualities, natural and acquired, provided Perelman with a temperament that fitted him for becoming either a paranoid, a suicide, or a humorist. He took up the last as his life's work, and this, for a Jewish lad from Providence, Rhode Island, proved no easy dough to stow, at least to hear Perelman tell it, which he did over and over. Complaint and grievance and grudge were also part of the Perelman personality. So, apparently, were penny-pinching, skirt-chasing, and self-serving well beyond the call of duty. A funny guy, Perelman.

Both of S.J. Perelman's parents were East European Jewish immigrants. Although his father's family arrived in this country with more money than most, they soon lost it in bad real-estate deals in Colchester, Connecticut. "Most of the family's money evaporated," Perelman later wrote in a comic sketch, "in visionary schemes like a Yiddish musical-comedy production of *The Heart of Midlothian*." Loss of family money forced Joseph Perelman, who was to be S.J. Perelman's father, to abandon a dream of one day becoming an engineer, and seems to have left him a permanently disappointed man. He married, found work as a machinist, lived in a Brooklyn tenement. In 1904, the year his son and only child was born, he moved his family to Providence, where opportunities for uneducated immigrants were said to be abundant.

Providence failed to provide, and there Joseph Perelman slowly failed in a dry-goods business and, later and more surely, as a poultry farmer. Like many a business failure, he turned to utopian socialism and strident attacks on capitalism (the world of *some* of our fathers). S.J. Perelman was raised without religious training. He knew enough Yiddish to fool the gentiles—if not really enough to speak to the Jews—and later used Yiddish phrases to salt his comic pieces. He was apparently a dreamy kid who whenever possible resorted to books, silent films, and any other form of fantastical hideout he could secure against the squalor and sadness of life at home.

The mature Perelman rarely spoke of his parents, according to Dorothy Herrmann, his biographer,* and late in Miss Herrmann's biography one learns that Perelman installed his mother in

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* *S.J. Perelman: A Life*, 337 pp., $18.95.

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a modest house in Los Angeles, where she complained, until her death at eighty-one, that he wrote checks but never visited. Allen Saalburg, a painter whom Miss Herrmann interviewed, told her: "I had the feeling that he wasn't quite pleased with his parents. Either he didn't like them or perhaps they weren't his style."

One also learns from Miss Herrmann that from his earliest years Perelman, who, one gathers from his mock-heroic self-descriptions, was not fond of his own looks, had "a divergent squint" in his left eye. Whether he lost it in later life, Miss Herrmann does not say. Symbolically, at any rate, he kept it; "a divergent squint" may in fact be the best way for a professional humorist to look upon the world. Certainly Perelman's experience at Brown University, where he enrolled as a freshman in 1921, did nothing to cause him to view the world more wide-eyedly.

Brown was a playboy school in those days and not yet the grimly permissive joint it is today. Fraternities were crucial to social success, and fraternities at Brown did not accept Jews. That Perelman was a commuting student, returning from class each evening to his parents' dying chicken farm outside Providence, merely compounded his isolation, for commuting students were felt to be rather déclassé. Poor and Jewish and a commuter-student at a snobbish university, homely and dreamy and the son of a disappointed man, Perelman, it seems fair to say, had been dealt less than a perfect hand in life.

Among the friendships Perelman made at Brown, the most fateful was with a student from New York City named Nathan Weinstein, who was called by his friends Pep, chiefly because he hadn't any. Nathan Weinstein later of course became Nathanael West, and Perelman, at twenty-five, would marry his eighteen-year-old sister Laura West (née Lorraine Weinstein). West, whose family was well-to-do, introduced him to Brooks Brothers clothes; also to the writings of James Joyce, Ezra Pound, and others of the then still very much alive modernist writers. Perelman was himself something on the order of a corned-beef aesthete in those days, drawing cartoons with Beardsleyian touches and, when he became editor of a campus publication called the *Brown Jug*, writing fierce editorials in the vituperative style of H.L. Mencken.

At Brown it became clear that Sid Perelman, who now signed his cartoons and pieces S.J. Perelman, would find a career in journalism. He began as a cartoonist, publishing his early drawings in the old humor magazine, *Judge*, of which Harold Ross, the founding editor of the *New Yorker*, was then a co-editor. He wrote for *College Humor*, and contributed to the *New Yorker* not long after it began publishing in 1926. Living in New York, he was an habitué of Jewish delicatessens, wore expensive duds, and sported a walking stick. He was in a small way part of the 1920's world of theater, show business, and smart journalism—a world that died in the Depression and never really revived. Unlike many another writer who came into maturity in the 1920's, Perelman was not a drinking man; apparently he could generate sufficient melancholy of his own without the aid of booze.

Writing comedy was, then as now, a hard dollar, but then, as opposed to now, there were more opportunities. There were the humor magazines, there were the radio comedy shows, there was the stage, there was Hollywood. Before he was through Perelman had worked them all. He wrote for the Fannie Brice-Royal Gelatine radio show; he wrote gags for, among others, Jimmy Durante and the harmonica player Larry Adler; he made many a foray onto the Broadway stage, once scoring heavily with a perfectly forgettable (and now justly forgotten) play he wrote in collaboration with Ogden Nash entitled *One Touch of Venus*; and he took several plunges into the schmaltz pools of Hollywood, about which he never ceased complaining (bitching all the way to the bank) and for which he is today best remembered for his work on the Marx Brothers' movies *Horse Feathers* and *Monkey Business* and on Mike Todd's *Around The World in Eighty Days*.

American cultural brows—high, middle, and low—were not yet quite so firmly set as they have since become, and nowadays one could probably not expend one's talents on such a variety of (shall we call them) clients and still hope to be taken seriously as a writer. But for S.J. Perelman this proved no problem. Self-loathing at turning out such goods also proved no problem for Perelman. Instead of loathing himself Perelman loathed the people who paid him for the shoddy work they wanted. This is what is called cutting out the middleman, in some circles also known as artistic conscience. Nothing ever was permitted to get in the way of S.J. Perelman's high opinion of himself.

For the most part, it is fair to say, the world has shared Perelman's high opinion of himself. Robert Benchley once claimed that Perelman "does to our weak little efforts at 'crazy stuff' what Benny Goodman has done to middle-period jazz." Dorothy Parker wrote, "Mr. Perelman stands alone in this day of humorists." (The day was 1957.) Perelman was chosen as an early subject for a *Paris Review* interview. The English critic V.S. Pritchett devoted an essay to him, giving him the best English minor-classic treatment. "Perelman commanded a vocabulary that is the despair (and joy) of every writing man," said E.B. White; "Sid is like a Roxy organ that has three pedals, fifty stops, and a pride of pedals under the bench. When he wants a word, it's there." Eudora Welty praised him regularly in prominent places, once in the New York *Times Book Review*, where she called him "a living

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national treasure." And Kurt Vonnegut, Jr. has now weighed in with: "Perelman handled the American language the way a virtuoso piccolo player plays 'The Stars and Stripes Forever.'" Were S.J. Perelman alive to read this paragraph, compact with kudos, he might, Perelmanesquely, reply: "Blurb me, daddy, eight to the bar."

And yet, in the subtle way in which the history of reputation works, one begins to sense an encroaching diminution of S.J. Perelman's high literary repute. This diminution owes less to what might be termed Perelman's retrospective ideological impurities—all homosexuals were for him screamers, on the interior-decorator model, and in his writing all women are either troublesome wives, wretched harridans, or luscious bimbos—than to revelations about his private life. One is of course entitled to be as unhappy as one wishes—it's a free country—but Perelman appears to have contributed to the unhappiness of others, and specifically to that of his own wife and children, and that is rather a different thing.

S.J. Perelman was not an altogether unpleasant man; he appears to have been unpleasant chiefly to those who needed him or relied upon him. He would switch publishers without provocation; he would drop an agent who considered him a friend, then use him in his writing under a name like Toby Swindler. When it came to money, he apparently believed, there are no friends, or rules, or ethics. Of course, in Hollywood and on Broadway he was often dealing with genuine financial thugs, and so one can forgive, or at least understand, his coldness.

But Perelman's dealings with his own family, if they are fairly reported in Miss Herrmann's biography, are less forgivable. For the Perelman marriage, the author leans rather heavily in her interpretation on a story by Josephine Herbst entitled "Hunter of Doves" (*Botteghe Oscure*, Spring 1954). A triangle of characters in the story is based on Nathanael West, Laura West, and S.J. Perelman. In the story Nathanael and Laura West are said to be devoted to each other with an intensity that is meant to suggest incestuous feeling. Miss Herbst writes: "For Bartram [the Nathanael West character] had been the beloved; would be so long as Nora [Laura West] had life. Baker [Perelman, who is Nora's husband] had been only his surrogate." Is this true? One has to remember that Josephine Herbst during these years was herself leading a quasi-secret lesbian love life, and may perhaps have been drawn to such sexy, under-the-table interpretations.

In her story, Miss Herbst writes, "Oh Baker was a devil with women. He did not have the appearance of a Romeo but he was successful with women. He was conspicuously untrue to his wife." About Perelman's philandering there is no serious dispute. Miss Herrmann reports that Perelman cheated on his wife the second day of their marriage. But then she had love affairs of her own, notably one with Dashiell Hammett. They had something resembling what we should now call an "open marriage," which, as is usually the case, chiefly resulted in opening wounds.

Laura Perelman was a formidable woman. In Hollywood she often collaborated with her husband on movie projects, and as a paid screenwriter. She worked with him, too, on plays. The Perlemans' son, Adam, has said that he thinks his mother a better writer than his father. Doubtful though this seems, what is not doubtful is that Laura Perelman's was a hard life. "She had that spiritually rattled look of a once beautiful, large woman who had gone through very difficult times," said Robert Gottlieb, who was one of Perelman's editors at Simon and Schuster. She became an alcoholic and was a member of Alcoholics Anonymous. Her brother's death in a car accident was devastating to her. She had more than the normal share of grief from her children. In her fifties she was discovered to have cancer of the breast. As her marriage worsened, her husband, after some forty years together, asked for a divorce, to which she reluctantly agreed. But before the divorce proceedings could be got under way, her breast cancer metastasized, causing blockage of blood to her heart, and she died in 1970, at the age of fifty-eight.

OTHER people have had equally sad, and even sadder, lives, but nobody had also to offer herself up for gags as Laura Perelman did in her husband's writing. In *The Swiss Family Perelman*,* a book about a family trip around the world, one finds the following comic description of how Perelman came to be talked into such a trip in the first place:

> It was a story of betrayal, of a woman's perfidy beside which the recidivism of Guy Fawkes, Major Andre, and the infamous Murrel paled to child's play. That the woman should have been my own wife was harrowing enough. More bitter than aloes, however, was the knowledge that as I lay supine in my deck-chair, gasping out my life, the traitress herself sat complacently fifty feet below in the dining salon, bolting the table d'hôte luncheon and lampooning me to my own children. Her brazen effrontery, her heartless rejection of one who for twenty years had worshipped her this side of idolatry and consecrated himself to indulging her merest caprice, sent a shudder through my frame. Coarse peasant whom I had rescued from a Ukrainian wheatfield, equipped with shoes, and ennobled with my name, she had rewarded me with the Judas kiss. . . .

In reviewing how his wife had talked him into this trip, Perelman has her tease him about his

* Along with *The Swiss Family Perelman* (287 pp., $6.95), Penguin has recently reissued two volumes of Perelman's collected pieces: *Baby, It's Cold Inside* (253 pp., $6.95) and *The Rising Gorge* (287 pp., $6.95).

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philandering, as when he brings up the danger of snakes and scorpions in Southeast Asia, and she retorts: " 'You'll cope with them. You did all right with that viper on Martha's Vineyard last summer. The one in the electric-blue swim-suit and the pancake makeup.' " Two pages later, he warns her that there are no martinis to be had on such a trip. "For an instant, as she strove with the animal in her, my fate hung in the balance." A bad sign for a humorist is when the reader winces after a joke.

Perelman's son and daughter were also used for comic copy. (He would refer to them as "the dwarfs.") The sad truth behind the jokes was that growing up with Sid and Laura Perelman could not have been easy: the fighting, the sulking, the boozing, the moving out to the Coast and back, all took their toll, especially on the Perelmans' son, who had eventually to be sent to reform school after a number of burglaries, muggings, and an attempted rape. After his son's second criminal offense, Miss Herrmann reports, Perelman began seeing a psychoanalyst. In a piece attacking contemporary advertising entitled "Tomorrow—Fairly Cloudy," he has a character say: "Yes, and thanks to Buckleboard, the new triple-ply, satin-smooth dirt-resisting wall plastic we now have an ugly little playroom where we can sit and loathe each other in the evening." There, given a bit of biographical knowledge, goes that reader's wince again.

Biographical knowledge is often the apple in the literary Garden of Eden. Once one tastes it, one tends to cease trusting either teller or tale. In this respect S.J. Perelman has not been altogether fortunate in his biographer. Dorothy Herrmann is not an especially careful writer, yet she comes to her task without any apparent *parti pris*; she is not, for example, a strong feminist, nor does she ride any other of the dismal "isms" of our day. As she sets out the details of S.J. Perelman's life, however, they are overwhelmingly condemnatory—so much so that to reread Perelman today with any degree of pleasure one must frequently do what one can to block out what one knows about his life.

If Baudelaire was an unpleasant man, Emily Dickinson a bit mad, D.H. Lawrence hugely muddled in his politics, these flaws in their characters, the essential disequilibrium in their personalities, do not destroy their art but become, in a mysterious way, part of it. But from a humorist, alongside whom we are asked to laugh, a certain sanity, a certain decency, a certain balance is required. Even though the received wisdom in these matters instructs one to ignore the life and concentrate on the work, knowledge that such a man was fundamentally not nice does not lubricate one's laughter; quite the reverse, it can cause one to gag on the gags.

Paul Theroux, Chaim Raphael, I.J. Kapstein, Al Hirschfeld, and others who counted Perelman among their friends might disagree strongly with this judgment. Prudence Crowther, who knew Perelman after his wife died and who has now edited a collection of his letters entitled *Don't Tread on Me*,* portrays Perelman in her introduction as a thoughtful and gentle man, full of polished anecdotes and rather comic crotchets, with a sweet tooth and an eye for the ladies. And the letters Miss Crowther has collected and selected for her volume do tend to make Perelman seem rather more charming than otherwise. Included are a number of inventive rambles, various bits done from within the personae of his standard comic pieces, some funny gossip about Dorothy Parker and Lillian Hellman, a few rather touching fatherly letters to his daughter (though none to his son), expressions of grief after the death of his wife, and sadness at his own eventually falling out of literary favor toward the end of his life.

It is almost as if there were two S.J. Perelmans to consider: the Perelman of Dorothy Herrmann's biography and the Perelman of Prudence Crowther's letters. As it happens, there is yet a third S.J. Perelman, the Perelman of the scores of comic pieces, the *feuilletoniste*, the high-*shticker*, the author of, as Jimmy Durante once put it, the "non-friction." This is the S.J. Perelman of whom Eudora Welty, in a review of a collection of Perelman's entitled *Baby, It's Cold Inside*, noted: "Back of some of these pieces, and not very far, lies deep sadness, lies outrage."

There is outrage aplenty behind a good deal that S.J. Perelman wrote, but it is not always clear what he is so outraged about—or if his outrage and its putative target are even roughly commensurate. Ever since Georges Buffon wrote on the subject in 1753, the style has been reputed to be the message, yet in Perelman it sometimes seems as if style has to make do in the absence of any message whatsoever. As for Perelman's style, when he was working well, it was no thing for a booby and a joy for the clever. "I can't write down to any special audience," he wrote to a friend. "Like any writer with self-respect, I've spent a good many years perfecting my tools and evolving a point of view and a manner that is characteristic." To read Perelman one has to have read a good deal else besides, for Perelman's style usually involves parody and pastiche, an attack on cliché, a raid on empty phrases, an exploding of unreality, leaving one who brings no bookish knowledge to his work in the literary equivalent of darkest nonsequiturial Africa.

At the heart of Perelman's style is his exotic vocabulary, which, in any given sentence, might play the slang off the arcane word, the Yiddishism off the Victorianism, the high-culture phrase off the low. A simple but characteristic S.J. Perelman sentence reads, "I fell

* Viking, 372 pp., $19.95.

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back into my Barcalounger, utterly flummoxed." His frame of reference was wide, and a single page might include mention of Scipio Africanus, George Cable, and *Partisan Review*. He could strike off the comic simile with a double bite, as when, in one of his sketches, he describes himself as being as "glacial and reserved as Sumner Welles at a B'nai Brith picnic." Naturally enough, he had mastery over the standard comic moves, such as the following poker-faced reversal: "They all laughed at Jean-Jacques Rousseau when he said man was perfectible, yet today we have people like Jody Powell."

There is also a Perelmanic prose rhythm, a marching cadence of false confidence, that is better conveyed in paragraph-length quotation than in analysis:

> An old subscriber of the *New Republic* am I, prudent, meditative, rigidly impartial. I am the man who reads those six-part exposés of the Southern utilities empire, savoring each dark peculation. Weekly I stroll the *couloirs* of the House and Senate with T.R.B., aghast at legislative folly. Every now and again I take issue in the correspondence pages with Kenneth Burke or Malcolm Cowley over a knotty point of aesthetics; my barbed and graceful letters counsel them to reread their Benedetto Croce. Tanned by two delightful weeks at lovely Camp Narischkeit, I learn twenty-nine languages by Linguaphone, sublet charming three-room apartments with gardens from May to October, send my children to the Ethical Culture School. Of an evening you can find me in a secluded corner of the White Turkey House, chuckling at Stark Young's review of the *Medea*. I smoke a pipe more frequently than not, sucking the match flame into the bowl with thoughtful little puffs.

Out of such comic materials, Perelman created his comic persona, or, more precisely, personae: the *faux-naïf* of the above paragraph; and the Mittyesque fantast, who dramatizes everything and fools no one and whose characteristic tone is caught in the following passage:

> Suddenly, without warning, the loungers by the pool were galvanized into attention. A man of imposing mien, who wore his white terry robe with the dignity of a toga and whose profile might have graced some early Roman post office, had approached the diving board. As he slipped from his robe, there stood revealed a body as flawless as a banana: the shoulders small and exquisitely formed, a chest that would have shamed Tom Thumb's, a magnificent melon-shaped paunch that quivered like junket at its owner's slightest command. With the ease of a born gymnast, he dropped on all fours, crept out warily to the very end of the diving board, crept back, and, sides heaving painfully, collapsed on a beach mattress.

The cowardly hero, the elegant runt, the devil-may-care shlepper—these types would later be made to pay handsome profits by Woody Allen, but S.J. Perelman was their progenitor.

Yet what did all of Perelman's comic gifts and skills come to? I have recently read more than a thousand pages of Perelman—which may, I suppose, be likened to a man walking into a room to announce that he has just eaten fifty pounds of chocolate—and I am not sure that I can say that it comes to much. Perelman's own ambitions were self-advertised as modest. When friends encouraged him to write a full-blown comic novel, he demurred, saying, "To me the muralist is no more valid than the miniaturist. . . . I am content to stitch away at my embroidery hoop." In the concluding section of *The Most of S.J. Perelman*, he wrote: "If I were to apply for a library card in Paris, I would subscribe myself as a *feuilletoniste*, that is to say, a writer of little leaves. I may be in error, but the word seems to me to carry a hint of endearment rather than patronage." These are modest enough ambitions, but does Perelman truly live down to them?

ALL too often, sad to report, he does. The received opinion on S.J. Perelman is that he was a scream and then, suddenly, late in his career, he lost his touch, and his humor became forced and hopeless. Miss Herrmann, who leans toward this view sets the date for Perelman's decline in the early 1960's, around the time that he himself was about to turn sixty. "His comic persona," she writes, "was no longer the wistful, bespectacled boy from Providence but an angry, cantankerous man, condemning almost everyone and everything. He began to lose the comic writer's most precious gift—a sense of humor." But problems had set in earlier. In a letter of 1955 to a friend he notes: ". . . I've been dithering about with a succession of snerd-like little ideas, trying to convert them into pieces for the *New Yorker* and achieving nothing more than daily frustration."

How much in Perelman's writing is snerd-like is depressing to consider. I do not refer to his writing for Hollywood, which he was wont to describe as "purest cat vomit," but to his *New Yorker* pieces and the pieces that went into his books. A great deal that Perelman wrote is an attempt to be funny not so much about wretched, as about merely silly excesses: the foolishness that regularly appeared in *Harper's Bazaar* and *Vogue*, idiotic advertising copy, show-biz vulgarity, dentistry, the melodramatic novels and movies he had read and seen in his adolescence. It is cruelly easy to summarize a piece of failed humor, but of the many that Perelman wrote perhaps the dreariest, reprinted in *The Most of S.J. Perelman*, is one that takes off from the copy on the back of a packet of frozen veal steaks, in which a veal steak addresses the purchaser. Taking a poor idea all the way out, Perelman has other foods in his refrigerator talk to him. Reading it you could die, but not from laughing.

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Perelman's best work was that in which his anger was genuinely engaged. A good example is *Acres and Pains*, a collection of pieces about a city man (himself) lost in his fantasies of country living who is picked clean by rural merchants, artisans, and other local hustlers. He can be fine, too, at parody, as in his famous sendup of Hammett-like tough-guy detectives, "Farewell, My Lovely Appetizer," or of a John P. Marquand-like character recounting Waspy life on a summer estate in Newport called Chowderhead. He can be extremely funny on Los Angeles, which he loathed and once described as the "City of the Living Dead" and "the mighty citadel which had given the world the double feature, the duplex-burger, the motel, the hamfurter, and the shirt worn outside the pants."

One requires a word three-up in intensity from loathing to describe Perelman's feelings about Hollywood. There is, for instance, a passage in *Westward Ha!*, a comic account of his travels with the cartoonist Al Hirschfeld, and, as they used to say in radio days, "t'ain't funny, McGee":

> A wave of nostalgia engulfed me as I remembered the decade I had spent writing motion pictures; a suspicious moisture glittered in my orb. What a splendid, devil-may-care band we had been in the 30's, brave lads and lasses all—ever ready to cut a competitor's throat or lick a producer's boot, ever eager to conform our opinions to those in authority, ever alert to sell out wife, child, and principle to attain the higher bracket, the fleecier polo coat, the more amorous concubine. Wave a paycheck at us and we could turn in our own wheelbase, strip ourselves inside out like a glove; the most agile, biddable, unblushing set of mercenaries since the Hessians.

Note the use of the first person plural, which strictly speaking precludes self-exculpation. Although Groucho Marx later complained that Perelman tended to take credit for the Marx Brothers movies, Perelman in fact took no pride in anything connected with his ventures in Hollywood, including the Oscar for best screenwriting adaptation that he later shared with the two other writers who worked on *Around The World in Eighty Days* for Mike Todd, whom he thought a standard Seventh Avenue huckster, not to mention a "psychopathic little bastard" and a "sinister dwarf." Perelman and Hollywood may have been an instance of a man eating his caviar and spitting in it, too.

Perelman did not make a vast sum writing for the movies though, in the Depression, he and Laura as a team were pulling in a thousand dollars a week. In later years he told Paul Theroux that he was among those writers who went out to Hollywood because, in the Depression years, they couldn't make a living elsewhere. That is no doubt partly true. Another part of the truth is that the Perelmans ran a complicated establishment, and always managed to live expensively but not well, with a place in Bucks County, an apartment in Manhattan, a separate office for him to work in, private-school fees, dogs, bills for psychotherapy—in sum, as we non-New Yorkers like to think of it, the full Manhattan catastrophe.

PERELMAN's view of himself as an artist was oddly riven. On the one hand, he had no complex feeling about being a sellout; he was unabashed in his yearning for a socko commercial hit. On the other hand, he was also perfectly unprepared to simplify his style to appeal to larger audiences. He was getting between $3,000 and $3,500 for his brief comic pieces in the *New Yorker*, yet, as he noted in a letter of 1957, he greatly resented the attempts of that magazine's editors to make "fussy little changes and pipsqueak variations on my copy." He complained regularly about how difficult writing was for him; according to his friend Heywood Hale Broun, after he had made a solid score with a television script entitled "Malice in Wonderland," he knocked off for a full six months. At one point he would insist on all the prerogatives, temperamental and otherwise, of the literary artist, claiming himself a writer, no mere humorist; at another point, he would avow only that "I try to write as well as I can on light subjects." On the wall of his office he kept a photograph of James Joyce, a writer he revered, yet he often conducted his own career as if he were Solly Violinski, Harry Ruby, Morrie Ryskind, or some other Broadway gagman.

If the humorist and the writer warred within Perelman, the humorist usually won. When the humorist won, not only the writer but the writing lost. A writer doesn't need subjects; a humorist scours newspapers, women's magazines, trade journals for them. In his search for subjects, Perelman even claimed that he had to travel so that he could find places "filled with things I can be hostile about." Dorothy Parker, who may have failed the test herself, once said "There's a helluva distance between wisecracking and wit. Wit has truth in it. Wisecracking is simply calisthenics . . . with words." When the humorist in Perelman had the upper hand, wisecracks prevailed, and so did puns and funny names. A piece with too many funny names—Suppositorsky, Sir Hamish Sphincter, Marcel Riboflavin—is often a clue that Perelman is straining.

Part of Perelman's problem lay in being a full-time professional humorist. It is one thing to be humorous by the way, or on the side; it is quite another when *all* one is is humorous. "Humorous writing—humor meant to be read—is shrinking and passing out of existence," Perelman told an interviewer in 1962. And he was correct insofar as he was talking about the kind of humorous writing whose subject is little more than a pretext for joking. (Even the work in this vein of that appealing man Robert Benchley is now near-

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ly unreadable.) Few things so improve one's chances of achieving wit as having a real subject to write about. One's chances are narrowed considerably, however, if one is writing about—to take three Perelman subjects that come to mind—trying to replace the favorite hat one lost at a party, establishing that all dry cleaners are crooks, or showing what dopes interior decorators are.

In a 1966 review of a new collection of Perelman pieces, Victor Navasky criticized him for writing about trivial things during a time of great political upheaval. (In the early 1960's, Navasky was the editor of a political satire magazine named *Monocle*, whose motto was, "In the land of the blind, the one-eyed is king." Now the editor of the *Nation*, Navasky has long since closed that one good eye.) Perelman resented the criticism, which reminded him of people who wanted him to line up on the side of the proletariat in the 1930's. "It isn't enough to make people laugh," he complained, "there must be messages." In the 1930's in a piece entitled "Waiting for Santy," he mocked the crude leftism of Clifford Odets (yet he also published in the *New Masses*). Politics, however, was not really his subject. He had fairly standard liberal politics, one suspects, but his general irritation with life went well beyond—or at least was outside—politics. He tended to find Richard Nixon and Jimmy Carter irritating in roughly the same way he would have found Des Moines or Fort Worth irritating. He could call Nixon "an everlasting *nudnick*," but also mock "the noble piety of the Hollywood folk," with their vast houses and large cars, immersing "themselves in the plight of the migratory workers and the like."

The larger subject awaiting S.J. Perelman was the culture at large during the years when it was becoming unhinged. Certainly he had the disdain required of the satirist, which comes through in neon in his letters. Hugh Hefner, he said, "nauseates me"; he referred to Johnny Carson as "that plastic character on the Coast"; and Barbara Walters was "the most insincere, brassy nitwit in the business." He also had a low opinion of John Updike and Donald Barthelme, who represented the new wave at the *New Yorker*. Taken to a stage production of Andy Warhol's *Pork*, he found it "unquestionably the most excremental, degraded, and degrading spectacle that has ever been vomited forth onto a public stage in modern times" and "the greatest corrective to sexual desire since the invention of saltpeter." As for the public falling-out between Lillian Hellman and Diana Trilling, he thought they ought to book themselves for a wrestling match at Chatauquas and county fairs, with the winner to be matched against Bella Abzug. Feeling out of it, he wrote to Frank Sullivan, his old friend on the *New Yorker*, to ask what Ring Lardner and Harold Ross would have thought of a professional foulmouth like Germaine Greer.

None of this, unfortunately, got into his work, where, in transmogrified form, it really belonged. Perhaps he was too long used to playing for small laughs. "I don't believe in kindly humor," he once said, and apparently he didn't believe in courageous humor either. Instead he continued to work the old vein, "button-cute, rapier-keen . . . S.J. Perelman," as he once jokingly described himself in a parody of *Time*-style. But it no longer quite worked for him. Suddenly his pieces began to be rejected; the *New Yorker* began to hold back his work in that famous journalistic black hole known as its "inventory"; reviewers ceased to be kind; no one was any longer calling him a national treasure or treating him as a national monument, except, perhaps, in the way a pigeon treats a monument.

DOING a reversal on a boy named Finn, Huckleberry Perelman decided to light out for civilization, and in autumn of 1970 announced that he was departing the United States for permanent residence in England, where his reputation was strong and where among his appreciators he had counted no less than T.S. Eliot. He told a reporter for the New York *Times* that he thought it was "volcano time" in the United States, that he found New York "pestilential," and that in England there was a greater appreciation of eccentricity, not to speak of good manners and consideration. Besides, he said, quoting Swift, life is "nasty, brutish, and short."

But Swift didn't say that, Hobbes did, and perhaps it is a bad omen to leave a country on a misattributed quotation, for Perelman lasted about two years in England, where, after an initial full-court press put on him by the English as a minor celebrity, he soon fell into loneliness and homesickness, longing for a pastrami sandwich and the turn of idiom that had given him his living. As he told Israel Shenker of the New York *Times*, "My style is mélange—a mixture of all the sludge I read as a child, all the clichés, liberal doses of Yiddish, criminal slang, and some of what I was taught in a Providence, Rhode Island school by impatient teachers. When I tried to think of an idiomatic expression in London, I had to reach for it. I felt out of touch with the idiom." He also told Shenker: "When I'm away [from New York], I miss the tension, the give and take. I feel it's a great mistake for any writer to cut himself off from his roots. One's work suffers by trying to transplant it to another milieu."

But in Perelman's case the roots had already pretty much dried up. His was a talent that showed no growth; and now he would continue to do the same old thing, only rather less well. He moved into the Gramercy Park Hotel. Needles-in-the-pants man that he was—the renowned world traveler Sir Sidney Shpilkes, as in imitation of his own style one might think of him—he continued his travels, but they didn't give him much

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pleasure. (He visited Israel and the Soviet Union for the first time and hated both.) He continued to write, but his writing no longer gave other people much pleasure. His final book, published posthumously and entitled *The Last Laugh*, included portraits of the Marx Brothers, Nathanael West, and Dorothy Parker. Yet these pieces turn out to be chiefly anecdotal, played for color, and without much in the way of penetration into character. Whatever strong and complicated feeling he had toward life and experience, he could not finally reveal in his writing, and these feelings died with him when he died, alone and at seventy-five, in his hotel room, of a massive heart attack brought on by arteriosclerosis.

In the front-page obituary of Perelman in the New York *Times*, William Shawn, then editor of the *New Yorker*, was quoted as saying that people were "so enormously entertained by him that they sometimes overlooked his great originality and his literary brilliance." Maybe so. Maybe, too, one can make a case for Perelman's having been a fine critic of the unreality of American life. Maybe one can, in the academic fashion of the moment, sell him as an early and potent critic of the hopeless instability and uncertainty of all language.

But more to the point is the remark made by the narrator of V.S. Naipaul's recent autobiographical novel, *The Enigma of Arrival*, who of himself as a young man writes: "I took refuge in humor—comedy, funniness, the satiric reflex—which in writing, as in life, is often a covering up for confusion." Perelman never surmounted the confusion in his life, at least not in his writings. His comic response to life gave many people pleasure, which is no small blessing. Still, one cannot help thinking that, had things worked out differently, he might have been an American Evelyn Waugh. Instead, wanting in ambition or soul or the energy necessary for art, he had to settle for being a humorist.

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Salinger Then and Now

Terry Teachout

EVEN though he has published nothing since 1965, the books of J.D. Salinger remain popular. *The Catcher in the Rye* alone still sells some 250,000 copies worldwide each year. It has been a long time, however, since anyone worth listening to thought Salinger a first-rate writer, long enough that most of us have forgotten just how seriously he used to be taken by some of our best critics. ("Have you been reading Salinger's stories about the Irish-Jewish Glass family in the *New Yorker*?" Edmund Wilson wrote to John Dos Passos in 1957. "I think they are very remarkable, quite unlike anything else.")

So it was against a background of comparative critical neglect that the case of *J.D. Salinger* v. *Random House Inc. and Ian Hamilton* made the newspapers last summer, putting J.D. Salinger back in the limelight for the first time in years. The occasion was the scheduled publication of a book about Salinger by Ian Hamilton, an English critic best known in this country for his biography of Robert Lowell. Advance interest in Hamilton's book was surprisingly high. Not that anyone really expected him to come up with anything much in the gossip department. Such biographical fodder as exists had already been quite thoroughly chewed over by the Salinger cultists. But the prospect of an intelligent biography of the creator of Holden Caulfield and Seymour Glass was encouraging enough. Galleys of the book were sent out, a publication date of August 29 was announced, and reviewers went to work.

The title of Hamilton's book, *J. D. Salinger: A Writing Life*, suggests the considerable diffidence with which the biographer had approached his task. "Since 1965," he wrote in an introductory note, "J. D. Salinger has chosen to withhold his work from the public domain—thus, it seems to me, effectively forbidding biographical intrusion." Having settled on this stiffish line, Hamilton hewed resolutely to it, passing up the chance to rummage through Salinger's garbage in favor of a reasonably careful interim examination of the public record, eked out with a few interviews here and there. It seemed more than likely that the ferociously and famously reclusive Salinger would be irked by even so modest an attempt at getting beneath the shiny surface of his enigmatic career, but the general assumption was that he would simply have to tough it out.

A few weeks before the official publication date, Random House sent every recipient of the galleys of *J. D. Salinger: A Writing Life* a form letter announcing that publication of the book had been postponed pending the resolution of a dispute with Salinger's counsel. Critics were warned not to publish until the case was settled. Salinger had clearly decided to try to suppress the book, and, as it turned out, Ian Hamilton himself had placed in Salinger's hands a weapon which in the end proved lethal.

The original version of *J. D. Salinger: A Writing Life* contained material drawn from seventy letters written by Salinger that had made their way over the years into the archives of various university libraries and which Hamilton had hunted down and copied for use in his book. A smart copyright lawyer had obviously gone over the manuscript carefully, for direct quotations from these letters were generally either kept very brief or shunned in favor of paraphrase. This material, while interesting enough, was hardly earth-shattering in its implications, but Salinger sued anyway, charging that Hamilton had made unfair use of his correspondence.

In an effort to mollify Salinger and his lawyers, Random House produced a second version which trimmed back the letters even further. But Salinger was so eager to prevent the book from seeing print that he actually came to New York in October to give a deposition, an unprecedented action for a man whose reputation for eremitism has long made Greta Garbo look like a party hound.

Salinger lost his suit in November but won on appeal in January. Though Random House is asking the U.S. Supreme Court to review the case, the damage has already been done. Scheduled and rescheduled and finally announced for this year's Christmas season, *J. D. Salinger: A Writing Life* now floats uneasily in what is likely to prove a permanent limbo. Barring an unexpected reversal, Ian Hamilton is out one book and a couple of dozen reviewers have unusable manuscripts on their hands. The only winners may be those lucky individuals who hung on to their galleys of the book, which are already soaring in value.

There are any number of possible interpretations of J. D. Salinger's suit, just as any number of salacious Salinger stories regularly make the rounds in New York. The suit was a publicity stunt. A sincere gesture by a genuine recluse. A purely professional action designed to protect Salinger's legal interests. A desperate measure by a man who for obscure reasons of his own does not want his work interpreted or his life recounted. This last explanation has a pleasingly solid ring to it. For Salinger is more than just a recluse: he is a critic-hater of long standing.

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"Against interpretation" might well serve as the motto on his coat of arms. And Ian Hamilton's book, for all its inadequacies, provided more than enough raw biographical ammunition for critics, sympathetic and hostile, to undertake a detailed examination of what made J. D. Salinger run.

NOT that such an examination has been rendered impossible by Salinger's suit. The pertinent facts after all were in circulation long before Ian Hamilton appeared on the scene, and they remain readily available to anyone within striking distance of a reasonably good library.

Jerome David Salinger was born on January 1, 1919. His father, a well-to-do New York importer of ham and cheese, was Jewish, his mother Irish. (This sentence alone contains sufficient material for a two-volume psychobiography.) Raised on the Upper West Side, Salinger moved with his family to an apartment in the East 90's in 1932 and was sent to Valley Forge Military Academy in Pennsylvania two years later.

The senior Salinger apparently expected his son to follow him into the ham and cheese business, but Jerome had other plans. After an abortive stay at Ursinus College, a Protestant liberal-arts school in Pennsylvania, he returned to New York and began his career in earnest by enrolling in a night-school course in short-story writing taught at Columbia University by Whit Burnett, the editor of *Story* magazine. Salinger's work first saw print in 1940 when Burnett published one of his class assignments. Within a few years he was regularly placing stories in "slick" magazines like *Collier's* and the *Saturday Evening Post*. These early efforts are a frankly commercial reshuffling of the trashiest aspects of William Saroyan and F. Scott Fitzgerald, and Salinger, who knew them for what they were, refused to collect them in later years.

Drafted in 1942, Salinger served in the Counter-Intelligence Corps as an interrogator, going ashore at Normandy on June 6, 1944 with the Fourth Division, taking part in the liberation of Paris and the Battle of the Bulge, and writing stories for the slicks in his spare time. He returned to the United States in 1946, deeply shaken by his combat experience and by an unsuccessful postwar marriage to a French girl named Sylvia.

Three of Salinger's stories, "A Perfect Day for Bananafish," "Uncle Wiggily in Connecticut," and "Just Before the War with the Eskimos," were bought by the *New Yorker* in 1948. These stories, unlike their fluent but undistinguished predecessors, were quickly and widely recognized as something special. "Uncle Wiggily in Connecticut" was bought by Hollywood. The publisher Robert Giroux offered to bring out a collection. But the real excitement came in 1951 when Little, Brown published Salinger's first book, a novel about a confused prep-school student that turned a moderately successful magazine writer into one of the gaudiest literary success stories of the postwar era.

The Catcher in the Rye, the story of a teen-ager named Holden Caulfield who flunks out of "Pencey Prep" and embarks on a solitary Christmas visit to New York, was immediately—and correctly—hailed as a tour de force of characterization. Clifton Fadiman, writing about *The Catcher in the Rye* for the Book-of-the-Month Club, was no more than just when he said that in Salinger

> we have a fresh voice. One can actually hear it speaking. . . . Read five pages; you are inside Holden's mind, almost as incapable of escaping from it as Holden himself. The portrait is complete and convincing. That rare miracle of fiction has again come to pass: a human being has been created out of ink, paper, and the imagination.

But it was Ernest Jones, Freud's pupil and biographer, who inadvertently captured the essence of the book in his sourly disapproving review for the *Nation*. Finding the novel "predictable and boring," Jones grumbled that Holden Caulfield was nothing more than an embodiment of "what every sixteen-year-old since Rousseau has felt." This is of course the point: Holden's alienation *is* universal. Nearly every unhappy adolescent who reads *The Catcher in the Rye* finds in it a comprehensive statement of his emotional plight, and the book will no doubt remain popular as long as there are still teen-agers around to read it.

To reread *Catcher* after the age of, say, twenty-five is to be freshly struck by the eerie precision with which Salinger evokes the sensation of adolescent *Angst*. Far more striking, though, is the sheer airlessness of his portrayal, the lack of any detachment from the dreary particulars of Holden's condition. The New York of 1951, widely reported by other witnesses to have been a moderately interesting place, exists in *Catcher* solely as a vague backdrop for the narrator's neuroses. And the metronomic alternation of *phony* and *goddam* and *crumby* in Salinger's first-person *récit* is equally oppressive. Henry James could have chosen any random paragraph from *Catcher* as supporting evidence when he explained why he chose to tell *What Maisie Knew* in the voice of a fully adult consciousness:

> Small children have many more perceptions than they have terms to translate them; their vision is at any moment much richer, their apprehension even constantly stronger, than their prompt, their at all producible, vocabulary. . . . Maisie's terms accordingly play their part—since her simpler conclusions quite depend on them; but our own commentary constantly attends and amplifies.

To be sure, there are other ways to write about children, and Mark Twain made use of most of them in *Huckleberry Finn*, a book to which *Catcher* bears a distinct resemblance. But Salinger's angry tale of imperfect self-discovery contains nothing remotely like the great passage in *Huckleberry Finn* when Huck takes his first uncertain step toward adulthood and responsibility ("All right, then, I'll go to hell") by deciding to help Jim escape from slavery. Faced with a dilemma roughly comparable to that of Huck, Holden Caulfield decides instead that "If you had a million years to do it in, you

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couldn't rub out even half of the 'Fuck you' signs in the world" and promptly throws any question of responsibility overboard by having a nervous breakdown.

IT IS clear that Salinger means for us to see Holden's breakdown as being in some undefined way desirable. But what can he be getting at? Are we to conclude merely that adulthood itself is "crumby," a consummation devoutly to be avoided? Or is the rejection implicit in Holden's breakdown more extensive in its significance? The world of *Catcher* is a pretty lousy place on the whole. All of Holden's teachers are fools or hypocrites or homosexuals. (Nothing dates this novel quite so much as Salinger's unhesitating equation of homosexuality with phoniness.) All of his friends are variously disagreeable. His brother is a Hollywood sellout. Only Phoebe, his kid sister, is pure.

Genuine misanthropy seldom wears well, and it is the adolescent misanthropy of Holden which is likely to strike adults as the least attractive quality of *The Catcher in the Rye*, the part that grates the most on rereading. If nothing else, one comes away from *Catcher* convinced that Holden Caulfield will grow up to be as disaffected and miserable an adult as he was a teen-ager.

But such criticisms come easily enough thirty years and three more Salinger books after the fact. "*Gatsby* for kids," a friend of mine remarked when I mentioned that I was rereading *The Catcher in the Rye*. So fliply revealing a dismissal was simply not possible in 1951. The first readers of *Catcher* saw only Salinger's freshness and technical mastery, and responded with unfeigned enthusiasm. The skepticism would come later, as critics began to suspect that Holden Caulfield was not so much a tour de force of Salinger's imagination as a brilliant but cripplingly narrow exercise in something very much like straight autobiography.

SALINGER'S literary antecedents are more clearly displayed in *Nine Stories*, which appeared two years after *The Catcher in the Rye*. The easy effects of first-person narrative are for the most part abandoned here in favor of an agreeably personal fusion of the relaxed, confiding tone of F. Scott Fitzgerald with the precisely observed social detail of John O'Hara. ("She was a girl who for a ringing phone dropped exactly nothing. She looked as if her phone had been ringing continually ever since she had reached puberty.")

But the strongest influence on the author of *Nine Stories* is an institutional one. For these stories constitute a stylistic epitome of what has come to be known as "the *New Yorker* formula," an individualized but nonetheless recognizable extension of the familiar idiom out of Chekhov by O'Hara which has shaped the fictional approach of countless American short-story writers in the years since Harold Ross founded the *New Yorker* in 1925. Critics were reluctant to praise *Nine Stories* without elaborate qualifications, and it is probably the *New Yorker* influence that is responsible for the mixed feelings these stories still evoke in even the most sympathetic reader. One sometimes feels that the Salinger of *Nine Stories*, like the Puccini of *Tosca*, is just a little too good to be true.

The prepossessing interest in children and adolescents that seemed merely an idiosyncrasy of characterization in *Catcher* emerges more clearly as a recurring theme in these stories, most of which feature small children in emotionally prominent roles of a distinctly unsettling kind. At the end of *The Catcher in the Rye*, Holden Caulfield rejects the struggle for maturity as an unsatisfactory alternative to the purity and authenticity of childhood. The reader of *Nine Stories*, encountering a whole series of variations on this theme, naturally begins to suspect that Salinger's own values are closely related to those of his own characters.

One incident from this period, recounted in detail by Hamilton but already familiar to Salinger buffs, is particularly revealing. Salinger moved to Cornish, a small New Hampshire town, in 1953. Shortly after his arrival, he made friends with a group of local high-school students who frequented a Cornish coffee shop, entertaining them regularly at his home. This idyll came to an abrupt halt when one of Salinger's young friends asked if she could interview him for the weekly high-school page of the local newspaper. Her article was subsequently run as a front-page scoop. Salinger, who apparently felt betrayed by the prominence the paper gave this interview, promptly cut himself off from his adolescent friends, erecting a man-high wooden fence around his Cornish home and retreating into the bizarre secretiveness which has characterized his behavior ever since.

At about the same time, Salinger met a nineteen-year-old Radcliffe student named Claire Douglas. Claire married a Harvard Business School graduate in 1954, but the marriage lasted only a few months, and when it was over she moved in with Salinger in Cornish. They were married in 1955, a month after the publication in the *New Yorker* of "Franny," an event which marked the beginning of Salinger's fateful literary obsession with the Glass family.

VARIOUS members of the Glass family, a snotty clan of child prodigies with a pronounced interest in Eastern spiritualism, turn up here and there in Salinger's earlier stories. (Seymour Glass, the family poet and guru-in-residence, commits suicide in "A Perfect Day for Bananafish.") But the five stories Salinger published in the *New Yorker* between 1955 and 1965 deal exclusively with the Glasses. These stories, two of which are collected in *Franny and Zooey* and two in *Raise High the Roof Beam, Carpenters* (one remains uncollected), have since been subjected to a degree of critical scrutiny that has infuriated Salinger. He dedicated his last book, *Raise High the Roof Beam, Carpenters*, as follows:

> If there is an amateur reader still left in the world—or anybody who just reads and runs—I ask him or her, with untellable affection and gratitude, to split the dedication of this book four ways with my wife and children.

There is an unintended touch of irony in this paean to the hasty

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reader. For while "Franny" is fully up to the standards of the best pieces in *Nine Stories*, the other four stories are marred by a peculiarly odious kind of narcissism. With each succeeding story Salinger retreats still further from the autonomous third-person point of view of *Nine Stories* in favor of lengthy and smotheringly mannered narratives in which the confiding tone he undoubtedly picked up from *The Great Gatsby* is exaggerated well past the point of distraction. ("The facts at hand presumably speak for themselves, but a trifle more vulgarly, I suspect, than facts even usually do.")

What is going on here? Once again, Salinger provides a clue, this time in the embarrassing jacket copy he wrote for *Franny and Zooey:*

> It is my rather subversive opinion that a writer's feelings of anonymity-obscurity are the second-most valuable property on loan to him during his working years. My wife has asked me to add, however, in a single explosion of candor, that I live in Westport with my dog. . . . I work like greased lighting, myself, but my alter-ego and collaborator, Buddy Glass, is insufferably slow.

The last sentence is worth a closer look. For Buddy Glass, Salinger's "alter-ego," is an Irish-Jewish short-story writer without a college degree who shuns publicity and who once wrote a story about the suicide of his saintly brother Seymour. His major literary vice is cleverness. He does not know how to talk to people he does not love. And he is unable to talk to those who do not love him.

One possible solution to this dilemma comes to mind at once: Buddy can always talk to himself. This is what actually happens in the long monologue, "Seymour: An Introduction," a love song that J. D. Salinger croons to Buddy Glass, his acknowledged self-portrait. As Salinger steadily decreases the distance between himself and his fictional creations, the narcissistic aspect of his work becomes increasingly distasteful, and Salinger's own "cleverness" in ascribing it to an "alter-ego and collaborator" does not diminish in any way the precision of the indictment. The more one knows about Salinger, in fact, the more he begins to sound very much like a clever but shallow diarist, and it is hard not to feel that this has a great deal to do with his extreme hostility to critics and biographers.

Salinger's solipsism reached a climax of sorts in "Hapworth 16, 1924," a still uncollected story published in the *New Yorker* in 1965. Indeed, all of Salinger's most exasperating preoccupations achieve apotheosis in this dreadful work, cast in the form of a letter from summer camp written by the seven-year-old Seymour Glass. Not surprisingly, Salinger has published nothing since "Hapworth 16, 1924," though longstanding rumors that he continues to write were confirmed by Salinger himself last October in the deposition he gave in *Salinger* v. *Random House and Ian Hamilton*. Asked what he had been working on since 1965, he replied, "Just a work of fiction. That's all. That's the only description I can really give it."

J. D. SALINGER was written off by the majority of American critics after the publication of "Hapworth 16, 1924." But timing is all in matters of popular culture. Salinger's *second* career, in which he emerged enshrined as a cult figure of the Age of Aquarius, was just hitting its stride in 1965, and he would become far more influential in this latter capacity than he ever was as a novelist or short-story writer.

V. S. Pritchett once described *The Way of All Flesh* as "one of the time bombs of literature." J. D. Salinger's books have had an equally potent and similarly delayed effect on American culture. The influence of *Catcher* could be seen as early as the mid-50's, at the height of the first teen-age revolution, when James Dean and Elvis Presley and Jack Kerouac were on the mind of every right-thinking American teen. And the earliest children of the baby boom responded with equal fervor a few years later to Salinger's seductive invitation to join what Mary McCarthy has aptly called "the world of insiders." Salinger became their very own author, a hip guru whose Zen-flavored gospel of youthful authenticity and neurotic rebellion was presumably unintelligible to the unfeeling adult world.

All demographic accidents have unforeseen consequences, and one of the most unlikely cultural outcomes of the baby boom has been the survival of Holden Caulfield into the age of Ronald Reagan. That Salinger's work would have an enduring appeal for the baby boomers was predictable. He is, after all, their Glenn Miller. His books, like Mrs. Glass's "consecrated chicken soup," are a kind of literary comfort food for bruised veterans of the Big Chill. But it is even more significant that some of the baby boomers who read Salinger as teen-agers are now teaching him as adults.

For years one of the most widely banned authors in America, J. D. Salinger has now become one of the most widely taught. *The Catcher in the Rye* and *Nine Stories*, with their appealing subject matter, pat ambiguities, and lazy symbolism, are classroom naturals. No self-respecting parent would dare object (in public, anyway) to the mildly vulgar language that once kept Salinger's books as far away from American classrooms as *Lady Chatterley's Lover*. In a better-ordered universe, it may be, such parents would storm the nearest school-board office, baseball bats in hand, to protest having Holden Caulfield's vision of the world forced into the minds of their children. But life is rarely so orderly, and so it looks as if Holden and his nasty friends are here to stay.

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New and Recent Books in International Relations

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Jason W. Clay and Bonnie K. Holcomb

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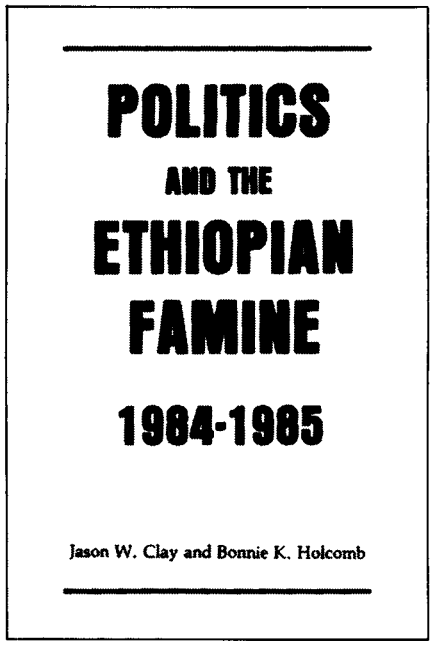

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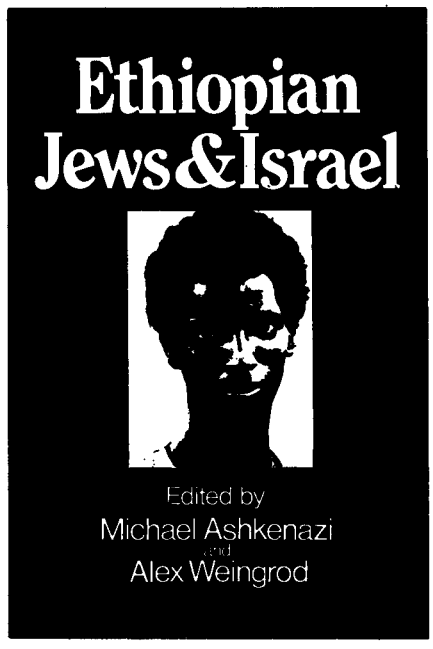

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Founding Father

CHAIM WEIZMANN: A BIOGRAPHY. By NORMAN ROSE. *Viking. 520 pp. $24.95.*

Reviewed by DAVID VITAL

ONE OF the small signs suggesting that Jews are at last beginning to be able to deal with the recent history of their people with relatively cool heads is the change that has come over the reputation of certain major figures in it. Chaim Weizmann (1874-1952) is one such. Eminent—in some circles preeminent—beyond words and question a generation, certainly two generations, ago, he cuts an enigmatic historical figure today. Although few would deny him a place alongside Theodor Herzl and David Ben-Gurion among founders of the Jewish state, one is increasingly hard put to say why.

Weizmann was not the man who precipitated the reentry of Jewry into the world of politics. That was Herzl's role and doing. Nor was he the man who presided over the actual, dangerous, and intensely dramatic reincorporation of a Jewish polity. That had to be left to Ben-Gurion. Weizmann's specific role and precise achievement in the interim may have been great, but on the basis of what can now be known about international politics between 1914 and 1939, they are far less susceptible of clear definition. And as he and his times recede from memory, and as contemporary myths and convictions and controversies evaporate, it is ever more difficult to pin that role and achievement down.

If Ben-Gurion was the Lenin of Israel (minus Cheka and Gulag, of course) and Jabotinsky its Garibaldi (or perhaps D'Annunzio) *avant la lettre*, was Weizmann then its Cavour? Which is to say, were his achievements truly those claimed by the little band of loyalists gathered around him in his lifetime and faithful to him and to his memory for decades after his death? Was he really the man who, in the course of World War I, and virtually single-handedly, induced the mighty British Empire to adopt so ostensibly unpromising and peculiar a cause as that of the Zionists? Or, to turn the question around, in view of the political-diplomatic system operative in London at the time, was such a splendid if not eccentric feat of diplomacy ever really possible? And in any case, how is it that so little has remained in the collective memory of the people, the nation Weizmann had sought to lead—and did lead for many years—when Ben-Gurion's reputation is entirely alive and in some respects greater than ever? Or is this twilight of uncertain recollection to which the popular mind seems to have relegated Weizmann no more than a function of the petty retrospective resentment of his opponents?

For what is clearly a notable and related fact is that unlike Ben-Gurion, Weizmann created no political tradition or institutions, above all no *party*, and therefore had no followers to perpetuate his fame in systematic fashion. But then if so, how was it that so formidable a political animal as Weizmann, a man so determined to act and lead in the national and international political arenas, left no structured political residue behind him?

The importance of such questions as these lies not so much in the simple and proper interest any man of great renown and multiple contradictions necessarily arouses, as in the fact that for virtually a generation the course of the Zionist movement was indeed largely determined by him: either directly by him as its (almost) universally accepted and presumably indispensable leader, as well as its uniquely qualified spokesman vis-à-vis the British government; or else indirectly by the fact that any alternative policies that might be proposed or adopted were in many of their essential respects explicitly anti-Weizmannite, which is to say conceived as plainly contrary to what he desired and believed in and promoted.

Who was he, then, this man who once cast so large a shadow? What remains when the inevitable accretion of myth has been peeled away? Answer that and you have provided some insight not only into the history of Zionism but also into the peculiarities of Jewish national and collective political behavior—indeed, into the heart of Jewish society—in the years just prior to those in which the Holocaust on the one hand, and the successful establishment of a sovereign Jewish state on the other, changed that society out of all recognition.

THE first really serious attempt to come to grips with Weizmann—warts and all, as befits a major historical figure—was Jehuda Reinharz's *Chaim Weizmann: The Making of A Zionist Leader,** published two years ago (too late, apparently, for Norman Rose to take advantage of it). Reinharz's book is a very detailed and responsible study, but is only the first volume of a projected three (or perhaps four). It clears much ground. It settles many curious and not unimportant questions relating to Weizmann's career, especially that part of it in which he (characteristically) sought achievements as both an academic and industrial chemist: both the social prestige he craved *and* economic security. But it stops at 1914 with Weizmann only on the eve of great things. The truly important questions, issues, and deeds all remain to be dealt with in the volumes to follow.

Hence the value of the present book, the first full biography to be written in the requisite nonhagiographical mode and to be based on proper sources: chiefly on the splendidly annotated twenty-

DAVID VITAL *is professor of political science at Tel Aviv University. The concluding volume of his history of the Zionist movement,* Zionism: The Crucial Phase, *will be published by Oxford University Press in October.*

* See the review by Theodore S. Hamerow in COMMENTARY, November 1985.

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three volumes of letters published between 1968 and 1972, put together by a vast team of scholars presided over by the late Meyer Weisgal. Rose writes well. He has a lighter touch than Reinharz and is a great deal readier to toss overboard what he judges to be dispensable detail. He is certainly a conscientious, competent historian and biographer.

Rose covers the ground all the way from the small-town beginnings of his hero in Motol near Pinsk to the last, sad years as the super-eminent but powerless President of Israel, a "prisoner" in the little mansion Weizmann and his wife had long before built for themselves at Rehovot: sick in body, depressed in mind, always aware that the locus of action and influence was elsewhere. He follows young Weizmann as chemist and as Zionist activist barking at Herzl's heels in the great man's lifetime, pronouncing on what he, Weizmann, took to be Herzl's failings for years after the latter's death. He deals with Weizmann as lover, fiancé, husband, and lover again. He grapples with the intricacy of Weizmann's unfortunate entanglements in both academe and industry at Manchester. And then, with the preliminaries over (and with some relief?), he launches into Weizmann's political career proper as it evolved—and indeed revolved—around the axis of the special relationship betwen the Zionists and Great Britain in which Weizmann certainly believed with all his heart, on which he relied almost to the end, and which he himself did so much to promote. On all these counts there is much to welcome in Rose's book.

THE author's particular strength as a biographer of Weizmann lies in his familiarity with what might be termed the Anglo-Jewish and Anglo-Zionist scene. He has written about all this before and his knowledge of, especially, the "gentile Zionists," as he has chosen to call them, is considerable. Yet it may be that therein lies a certain weakness. For the net effect of relying as heavily as Rose does on the evidence provided by Weizmann himself and his friends is substantially to narrow the perspective and reinforce that version of events which Weizmann and his entourage believed in. In this way the book is largely deprived of the critical dimension that one now has the right to expect.

Accordingly, what emerges is a lively recounting of a life as the eponymous hero himself, so one supposes, might have considered acceptable. Where Weizmann is—or was believed to be—triumphant, there it is victor's history. Where he lost out, there it is victim's history. What Rose does not really provide us with is "contemporary" history, in Croce's sense of the term, namely, history informed and enriched by the perspectives of our own times. Indeed, one positively misses the author's own comments, his own *obiter dicta*.

Weizmann, after all, was a man

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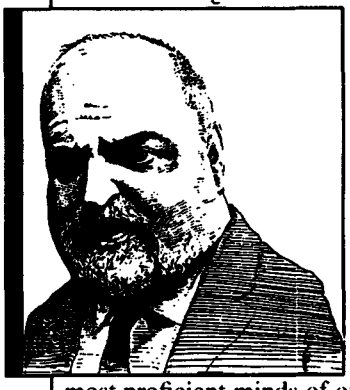

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who, as his many thousands of letters attest, was endowed with huge resources of nervous energy. He was a man who for decades—apart from periods of depression and isolation—was constantly talking, traveling, writing: a man of political action (as opposed to reflection) *par excellence*. What were the deep sources of that energy? What drove him? How is one to account for the multiple contradictions in his personality and conduct: unswerving dedication to a cause and overweening ambition; selflessness and self-indulgence; some generosity and some cruelty; love of homely *yiddishkeit* and the very plainest middle-class snobbery; Jewish nationalism and loyalty to Britain; honesty of major purpose and petty lies and prevarication on lesser matters?

These things can indeed be gleaned from Rose's book, and the author's own honesty of purpose is abundantly apparent in his effort to present a real man in the real world, but what he does not do is to make explicit the questions that necessarily arise in the reader's mind, let alone provide what he himself believes to be the appropriate answers to them.

In itself, Rose's command of the Weizmann papers is admirable, and it will probably render his book required reading by all students of the Zionist movement for some time to come. But the flip side of this is the insufficient attention paid to that which can be learned from the doings, writings, and recollections of Weizmann's rivals and competitors and critics, of those who had other, but related or overlapping experiences. I have in mind not only Ben-Gurionists and Revisionists, but, at various times, Ahad Ha-'Am and the leading Russian Zionists—Tchlenov, Idelson, Ussishkin—who were flesh of his flesh. And what one wants to know above all is what the *British* thought they were about when they entered into the special relationship upon which Weizmann's heart was so plainly set, as opposed to the construction Weizmann himself and his friends put upon their extraordinary decision to do so.

In short, while this is a valuable book, the problem Weizmann sets us remains to be thoroughly explored, and a persuasive assessment of his achievements and career has still to be drawn up.

On the Eve of Greatness

FROM THIS MOMENT ON: AMERICA IN 1940. By JEFFREY HART. *Crown. 352 pp. $22.50.*

Reviewed by PETER SHAW

As TIMES change so do preferences for the past. In the 1960's and 1970's, the eras of choice were the American 1930's (on their politically radical side) and 1920's Weimar Germany (on its culturally radical side). In the 1980's our much-touted retreat from radicalism has shifted interest to the inwardness of turn-of-the-century Vienna. Depending on one's point of view, each of these earlier periods can be seen either as a model or as a caution, but what their interpreters always have in mind, at least implicitly, is their similarity or contrast with the sweeping-away of established norms and values accomplished by the American counterculture of the 60's and 70's.

Jeffrey Hart's previous book, *When the Going Was Good: American Life in the 1950's*, was an explicit challenge to the notion fostered by celebrants of the 60's that the preceding Eisenhower decade had been an age of conformity waiting to be purified by the winds of the counterculture. Drawing on his own memories, on popular histories, and particularly on sports, he reconstructed an era of admirable self-confidence fed by a conviction of national strength and a positive commitment to settled behavior.

But the last period when the going was *really* good, at least from the point of view of Jeffrey Hart—a professor of English at Dartmouth, an editor of *National Review*, and a syndicated columnist of conservative views—was the time just before World War II, and in particular the year 1940, when he was ten. Much more so even than the 1950's, this is a period requiring a strong reinterpretive effort if it is to be transformed from the worst of times to the best of times. After all, in 1940 the Depression had not yet lifted; Hitler's Blitzkrieg had overcome Denmark, Norway, Romania, Bulgaria, Hungary, and France; the escape of the British Expeditionary Force over the water from Dunkirk was followed by the nearly fatal air Battle of Britain; in the wake of Stalin's pact with Hitler, Finland was being decimated by the Soviet Union while Japan was brutally subjugating China and threatening much of the Pacific.

Nevertheless, Jeffrey Hart is able to find a spirit of energetic hopefulness and good will in the United States of 1940. The New York World's Fair conveyed a sense that the sleeping giant, America, was about to forge a modern society of technological wonders. Though the war already on the horizon would blast much of that promise, it would also demonstrate that Americans were equal to the moral and physical challenges of the times. For Hart, the source of this capability and much else that is to be admired in American life in 1940 derived from the outlook and spirit of the American middle class—informed, genteel, "progressive in the old sense," high-minded, optimistic, dedicated to fair play.

HART conveys his attachment to the period through a combination of his own childhood recollections—he was himself the son of middle-class Republicans—and a newsreel-like account, reminiscent of John Dos Passos, that reaches back into the 1930's and forward well into the war. He recalls summers at the Jersey shore and trips to the World's Fair, the new LaGuardia Airport, and Brooklyn's Ebbets Field. He provides sketches of Dunkirk and the Finnish war, and essays on Roosevelt, Churchill, Mussolini, Stalin, and Hitler. He discusses the books and movies of 1940; analyzes the styles

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PETER SHAW, *whose article, "The Demotion of Man," appeared in our September 1986 issue, is the author of* The Character of John Adams *and* American Patriots and the Rituals of Revolution.

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of the year's sports greats (Joe Dimaggio, Joe Louis, Sonja Henie, and the tennis players Don Budge and Frank Shields) and recreates outstanding sports events: the Dartmouth upset of Cornell in football and Don McNeill's victory over Bobby Riggs in the U.S. lawn tennis championship.

Hart's originality in treating these subjects lies in his setting before the reader the fruits of his perceptive and imaginative reading in previously published accounts of the period, including those of contemporary journalists, from whom he quotes extensively. For example, from a contemporary issue of *Architectural Record* he has rescued a perceptive observation that the crowds snaking their way along ramps to the exhibits at the World's Fair were themselves being made a decorative element in the spectacle. And he has found striking passages in Richard Snow's *Coney Island,* Walter Lord's *The Miracle of Dunkirk,* Isaiah Berlin on Churchill, Mencken on the 1940 Republican Convention, and small gems from Westbrook Pegler, Will Durant, Joseph Alsop, Arthur Daley, and Jimmy Cannon.

WHEN it comes to the selection of minor personalities and events, on which the texture of his own book depends, Hart can be alternately encyclopedic and oddly selective, depending on how well the matters at hand convey the spirit of the period as he sees it. Thus, he omits the Smith Act but covers Edward G. Robinson's *Dr. Ehrlich's Magic Bullet* and Mickey Rooney's *Young Tom Edison.* He deals with Rooney's "Andy Hardy" series but omits *His Girl Friday,* the adaptation of Ben Hecht and Charles MacArthur's *The Front Page* in which the tough newspaperman role was recast to be played by the comedienne Rosalind Russell. This was arguably the best movie of the year; certainly it provides as good an example of American insouciance as one could hope to find.

Questions of selectivity aside, when Hart is hewing to his emotional and intellectual commitment to middle-class America, *From This Moment On* both exerts a period charm and conveys an arresting vision of the country. But one often senses a certain muting of the book's message. It is as if Hart felt apologetic about celebrating a year of Depression and the fall of Europe, and as a result, had grown apologetic about something else as well: the very ethos he intrepidly set out to rescue and defend.

Rather than arguing for his values, Hart has chosen for the most part to evoke them in an understated, *New Yorker*-ish manner. Thus he details the somewhat uncomfortable leisure of straw-hatted men strolling the boardwalk in Ocean Grove, New Jersey, and the obedient, innocent pleasure of the crowds at the World's Fair. The Fair's theme of progress for "the people," he briefly argues, represented a "benign" American mean between the insurgent, proletarian

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rhetoric of Communism and the race-asserting bombast of Nazism. The same mean is represented by Hart's personal heroes in the book, particularly New York's Robert Moses, builder of roads, parks, and beaches designed to serve the people by simultaneously entertaining them and elevating their taste. Yet in celebration of Moses, who like others of Hart's heroes has been the subject of a considerable amount of liberal debunking in the intervening years, Hart says a good deal less than one might have expected.

He writes approvingly, for instance, that "Bob Moses was Jewish by extraction, but not by religion. He was a Yalie, a New Yorker, and an American." So far have we come in our elevation of ethnicity as a supreme determinant of personal identity that such a description would probably be taken by many today as an insult all around. Yet Hart is right to remind us that there have always been many members of American ethnic groups who, like Robert Moses, have felt quite at home with native American cultural styles (albeit he neglects the titanic efforts they sometimes have had to make in order to gain acceptance). In view of the present low repute of the old melting-pot theory of America, one understands Hart's evident reluctance to argue the case for assimilation fully—after all, as a member of the group to which the "others" were once expected to assimilate, his attitude could be taken as self-interested and patronizing. Yet the matter is too basic to Hart's ideal vision of America for him to have treated it so casually.

Hart best conveys that vision through his accounts of sporting events. In 1940 the Cornell football team "beat" Dartmouth on a last-minute play mistakenly allowed by the referee; Cornell's president wrote a letter turning down the victory, which was then awarded to Dartmouth. Or again, at a crucial point late in the U.S. lawn tennis final, Bobby Riggs lost a point on a technicality; his opponent, Don McNeill, purposely hit a ball out of court to even the scales. Although it is easy to sneer at these gestures as the painless noblesse of the privileged, Hart points out that "in 1940 the players were mostly successful athletes from ordinary backgrounds." They did not inherit, they aspired to, "the graceful restraints of the gentlemen's code." Equally admirable were Joe Louis's "dignity," "innate decency," and "chivalry," and Joe Dimaggio's "natural tact" and "great personal dignity in a professional game that was often raucous and rowdy."

THE sporting ideal comes together fleetingly with politics when we read of the crowd at a benefit tennis match for embattled Finland giving former President Herbert Hoover a five-minute, anti-New Deal ovation, or of Joe Louis endorsing Wendell Willkie for the Presidency. Willkie is another of Hart's particular heroes but in discussing him Hart's defensiveness again comes to the surface. Thus he grants apologetically that Willkie, dubbed the country-club candidate by the acid-tongued Alice Roosevelt Longworth, "was also the overwhelming favorite of the educated middle class, the business and professional people." Defensively, too, Hart calls Willkie a genuine "grassroots candidate *in a way*, swept into candidacy by a powerful national emotion about events in Europe." That emotion was isolationism—on which, as it happens, Franklin D. Roosevelt also played in his successful campaign against Willkie. The trouble, Hart admits, is that Willkie's isolationism was no less manipulative than Roosevelt's. In a later vignette, after Roosevelt had made Willkie a goodwill ambassador to the Soviet Union, Hart further undercuts his hero by showing him to have been utterly naive about the realities of Stalin's repressive rule.

As with Willkie, so with other figures of the time who would seem to have offered some alternative to the liberal ethos of the day. Just before the war, Hart recalls, "sober arguments" in favor of accommodating Japan were advanced by some, only to be ignored in the growing atmosphere of hysteria; but then Hart quickly shifts to the intolerable excesses committed by the arrogant and cruel Japanese in the Pacific. He mentions that Lindbergh led the antiwar movement "with courage and eloquence," but then drops this version of isolationism, too. Later he begins what appears to be a partial rehabilitation of Mussolini, but ends up describing him as a "jackal" for his cynical, cowardly, and ultimately self-destructive declaration of war against England and France. In the end, ironically enough, the most commanding figure in *From This Moment On* proves to be Roosevelt, the aristocratic Democrat who rode to power on a wave of ethnic and machine politics.

So it is that the voice of the conservative columnist Jeffrey Hart is repeatedly muted and almost absorbed in this book by the emergent liberal heroes, liberal thought, and liberal spirit of 1940. Having chosen to treat all of these with balance and restraint—two undeniably admirable qualities of the culture he wishes to celebrate—he has ended up with a charmingly nostalgic but still tentative attempt to transform our impression of America in 1940 from a nation in the last phase of a defeating Depression into one standing at the brink of technological and cultural triumph.

The Common Interest

AMERICAN SOCIETY: PUBLIC AND PRIVATE RESPONSIBILITIES. Edited by WINTHROP KNOWLTON and RICHARD ZECKHAUSER. *Ballinger. 360 pp. $24.95.*

Reviewed by LESLIE LENKOWSKY

NOT least among the supposedly novel beliefs attributed to the Reagan administration is that many activities undertaken by government should rather be done in the private sector. In fact, this is not entirely a new idea; since the early days of the nation, public officials have looked to the private sector to perform tasks they could not, or would not, do by themselves. During the 1960's the practice became quite common, as the Kennedy and Johnson administrations enlisted a variety of non-governmental organ-

LESLIE LENKOWSKY *is president of the Institute for Educational Affairs.*

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izations in the "war on poverty" and other efforts.

Yet the Reagan administration has made much more of this idea, while also strongly suggesting that Washington would in the future be doing much less on its own. Early in his first term, President Reagan created a Task Force on Private Sector Initiatives and charged it with promoting "private-sector leadership and responsibility for solving public needs, and [recommending] ways of fostering greater public-private partnerships." At the same time, he told his cabinet to examine existing programs "to determine which could be more productively carried out by the private sector." Largely as a result of this and many subsequent studies and directives, "privatization" is now one of Washington's buzzwords for a broad spectrum of issues—economic as well as social and even, some would argue, in foreign policy. Not a few leading Democrats have hopped on board as well.

How much actual difference this philosophy has made is a matter of some dispute. Critics of the administration have claimed that as a result of it essential government services have been impaired, needs unmet, rampant scandals created, and public leadership and authority eroded. Judging from polls showing renewed support for federal social programs, many Americans now may also believe that too much has been entrusted to the private sector.

On the other hand, many who generally support the Reagan administration feel that it has been too timid in reducing the size of the federal government. Public spending, they say, remains too high, regulatory policies continue to be overly restrictive, and the much-ballyhooed Private Sector Initiatives program has turned out mostly to be a new way of soliciting private contributions for government purposes. Far from carrying out an agenda for privatization, these critics argue, the Reagan administration has allowed innovative ideas like educational vouchers and enterprise zones to languish.

The distinguished group of contributors that Winthrop Knowlton and Richard Zeckhauser have assembled in *American Society: Public and Private Responsibilities* do not try to resolve this dispute. As befits a book commissioned for both the 350th anniversary of Harvard University and the 50th of what is now the John F. Kennedy School of Government, its concerns are far loftier than the mundane question of whether the Reagan administration has rolled back the public sector. However, the essays contained in this volume are essential reading for anyone who wishes to answer that question intelligently.

One reason is that they show how difficult it is to think about separating public and private responsibilities. History and politics have conspired to ensure that few —if any—activities fit neatly into one sector or the other. As Diane Ravitch recounts in her essay on the development of American education, at various times the methods and values associated with private schools have been influential, at other times those of the public schools. As perceptions have changed, today's system has evolved into a complex blend of the strengths (and weaknesses) of each. In this as in other areas of policy, untangling public and private responsibilities seems an insurmountable task.

Even if it could be done, it is hard to say how. The efforts of political economists to specify a proper division of roles, Zeckhauser notes in his own contribution, "are not widely understood, carry little political weight, and except in the defense area explain little about the nature of government activities." Although the private sector might generally be more efficient at producing things, the public sector sometimes has an advantage, especially where fair treatment is involved, or the inculcation of certain values, or limiting profits.

By the same token, although government is normally thought to be better at redistribution, the truth

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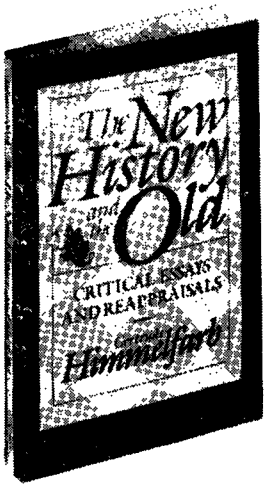

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is that much redistribution occurs in the private sector, often as the result of regulatory policies that could as easily (and perhaps more efficiently) be carried out through fees, prices, or other market mechanisms. As for assisting the poor and the needy, Zeckhauser writes that government programs have by no means been an unequivocal success and in some cases private philanthropy might be more helpful.

Yet if neither history nor economic theory offers sure guidance, greater clarity on the relative capabilities of each sector might permit desirable improvements. For example, Nobel Prize-winning biologist Gerald M. Edelman argues here that the displacement of private support for basic scientific research by public sources has led to an emphasis on short-term, mission-oriented work at the expense of the long-range, open-ended exploration that is more likely to produce conceptual breakthroughs. He recommends reestablishing a system of funding of distinguished institutions by "private sources and foundations without concern for some of the notions of democracy that must be heeded in disbursing government funds."

Much the same point is made by Knowlton in his essay on the arts. Truly creative work, he observes, is most likely to be underwritten by a relatively small number of private sources, attracted for one or another reason to the artist's idiosyncratic vision. Rather than endlessly seeking to stimulate new discoveries, as they now do, government endowments (and their bureaucratic counterparts among the giant foundations) might more usefully provide sustaining support for artists and institutions with already established reputations.

"Social assignments should play to social strengths," generalizes Michael Walzer. Government should be responsible for those tasks that require coercion; the private sector for those where a wide range of individual choices is desirable; the "social sector"—voluntary associations, religious groups, and so on—for those where significant minority interests are found. A reasonable prescription, but one which overlooks the main point. Often, what a task seems to require is as much a creature of the customary arrangements for doing things as it is a means for determining them. A nation with a strong commitment to the public sector may imagine that "creativity" in the arts and sciences is less important than other goals (or may emerge along with them). Conversely, a nation without such a commitment may think that civic virtue is no more than the totality of individual choices.

In other words, clear thinking about what the public and private sectors can best do is still no substitute for a sense of what the common interest really demands. This is most evident when public and private responsibilities clash. As Thomas C. Schelling and Glenn C. Loury show in their respective essays on cigarette smoking and poverty, much of what we regard as problematic is the result of behavior over which individuals have considerable control. Expanding the public role might help somewhat (and it may also hurt, if the wrong idea of the public interest prevails), but the surest route to improvement lies through changes in private perceptions of desirable behavior. What matters in these (and other) cases is not just the locus of responsibility, but also how it is exercised.

Shifting duties between the public and private sectors is thus not merely a matter of achieving greater efficiency, or fitting tasks to capabilities. It is about the character of these tasks and duties as well. Whatever virtues the Reagan administration may see in privatization as a general strategy, by insisting that those who receive welfare benefits should be obliged to take steps to become less dependent, it has sought to use the power of government to change the choices recipients make privately (though to what effect remains to be seen). Turning other government activities over to private hands might fundamentally alter their nature, too.

That is why there is so much fuss about the Reagan administration's ideas. The interest groups, the clients, the employees, and others who have grown accustomed to and benefited from the current array of public services are alarmed that the new arrangements might be less advantageous, or at any rate considerably more uncertain. With careful planning these worries can be partially assuaged, but nothing much can be done to gloss over the fact that privatization may also change what these groups and people have been doing. For better or worse, a deregulated airline, or an arts community more reliant on private benefactors, or a school system where vouchers play a prominent role *is* different, just as is a welfare system that makes demands upon recipients.

For its part, the Reagan administration has been less than forthright in presenting its case for such changes. Most often it has used arguments based on relative efficiencies, or conceptions of a theoretically proper division of government services. At times, it has even gone out of its way to suggest that the purposes served by public programs will not be affected at all by transferring them to private control. But the language of economics and public administration, even if convincing, is ill-suited to resolving questions that are really political. What the Reagan administration needs to do instead is to explain (if it can) why giving more responsibility to the private sector will help realize the public interest. Otherwise, its progress in this area will remain confusing and disappointing, even to its own followers.

Comic Truths

THE COMPLETE YES MINISTER: THE DIARIES OF A CABINET MINISTER BY THE RIGHT HON JAMES HACKER, MP. Edited by JONATHAN LYNN and ANTONY JAY. *Salem House. 514 pp. $19.95.*

Reviewed by NELSON W. POLSBY

IN A brilliant lecture about a decade ago, the late Sir Huw Wheldon, then presiding genius of BBC Television, contrasted the traditions informing television drama

NELSON W. POLSBY *teaches political science at the University of California, Berkeley. His books include* British Government and Its Discontents *(with Geoffrey Smith).*

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in Britain and America. American television tends to be a manufactured rather than a crafted product, he said, frequently manufactured to a very high standard but nevertheless responsive importantly to the mass-production tradition of Hollywood that seeks above all to give pleasure. In Great Britain, he said, "Situation comedies are written by writers and acted by actors and getting them made is necessarily a slow and laborious process." One interesting consequence of the difference in the two traditions was how very few episodes tended to be made of the great British television comedy series, as compared with the dozens and dozens of episodes available of their American counterparts. The British comedies like *Fawlty Towers* and *Dad's Army*, he argued, were made "in the tradition of British literary and dramatic art." And this meant accepting the responsibility not only for giving pleasure, but also for "the exploration of truth."

There is no doubt that this is an arresting argument. But how convincing is it? Are not American situation comedies written by writers and acted by actors? Little as I know about the production of American television, it has certainly seemed so to me. There is evidence, however, of differences in common practices in the two countries that lends plausibility to Huw Wheldon's view. The American practice, for example, of hiving one series off from another as a particular character catches the public fancy—*Rhoda* and *Phyllis* and *Lou Grant* from the *Mary Tyler Moore Show*, and *The Jeffersons* from *All in the Family*—does indeed suggest a tradition of manufacture rather than of literary effort.

And then there is, on the British side, the extraordinary phenomenon of *Yes Minister*. Anglophiles already know about *Yes Minister*, the BBC comedy series featuring a fictional bumbling cabinet minister and his department's senior civil servant who is subordinate to him, but by no means subservient, or is it the other way around? By British standards, this has been a long-running series: twenty-one episodes were written and aired between 1980 and 1983 plus recently another eight episodes called *Yes Prime Minister* in which the main character has been promoted. The series has been shown in the U.S. this past year on PBS.

The popularity of *Yes Minister* among British politicians and others in the know has been astounding. They have watched it avidly, quoted it over dinner, and made it into a national fad. They have readily endorsed the notion that much of the humor in the series has arisen from its "exploration of truth." Last New Year's Day the two main actors were, by virtue of their work in the show, given honors by the Queen. And now, perhaps even more remarkably, a book has been adapted from the scripts. We can, in consequence, see how well *Yes Minister*, which is undeniably fun to watch, stands up as written work.

In shaping their materials to a new medium, the authors had an exemplar readily to hand. Since the television series was in the first place partially inspired by the lengthy diaries of Richard Crossman covering the years when he served as a minister in a Labor government, the transmogrification of television scripts into a parody of the Crossman diaries—including illustrations of faked-up interoffice memoranda, newspaper clippings, and so on—has proved to be a happy one. Written dialogue becomes remembered spoken dialogue, framed here by comments not only by the Minister himself but also—frame surrounding frame—by the "editors" who interpolate "interviews" with other participants, pertinent "documents," and annotations necessary to flesh out the "record." This is a flexible and capacious format.

SUBSTANTIVELY, the main message is predominantly a cynical but, I conjecture, to British audiences a rather reassuring one. It is that the British central bureaucracies re-

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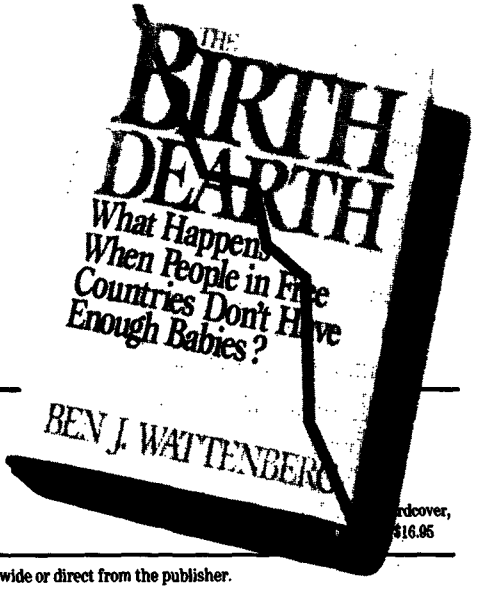

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quire (1) stability, i.e., no changes whatsoever and (2) no political interference. These internal requirements are vigilantly protected by civil servants and in the end they prevail over absolutely everything. Especially they prevail over exigent demands of public need, even though the need may be voiced by the Minister himself. As long as this is the case, presumably British problems are not all that terrible, and Britain will muddle through. So the very real conflicts that are described here can be taken as comedy, not tragedy.

There is, for example, the account of the Minister's visit to a fully staffed and fully equipped National Health Service hospital, humming along at full tilt. The Minister writes:

> I was shown several empty wards, several administrative offices that were veritable hives of activity, and finally a huge deserted dusty operating theater suite. I enquired about the cost of it. Mrs. Rogers informed me that, together with Radiotherapy and Intensive Care, it cost two and a quarter million pounds. I asked her if she was not horrified that the place was not in use. "No," she said cheerfully. "Very good thing in some ways. Prolongs its life. Cuts down running costs." "But there are no patients," I reminded her. She agreed. "Nonetheless," she added, "the essential work of the hospital has to go on."

No doubt an exaggeration, but an illuminating one. Bureaucracies everywhere are organizations filled with human beings who respond to all the real incentives in their environment, and not merely to the frequently ephemeral stated goals of the enterprise. And it is possible to show this most plainly if the stated goal is made to disappear altogether. The Minister notices the lack of clothing on the emperor, and complains, but fortunately for the maintenance of stability, continuity, public order, and good form, nobody listens. This very funny book makes this point again and again, painlessly and pointedly. There is rather more outright, up-front greed—"Have a quango, Tom. Have a knighthood, Dick. Have a peerage, Harry"—in *Yes Minister* than one would likely observe as a fly on the wall in Whitehall, but what is hyperbole for if not to bring up the highlights, so that outsiders can understand the truth that underlies an otherwise hard-to-read situation?

Bureaucrats, being very powerful and full of soothing self-protective mannerisms, may be the chief sources of humor in contemporary British politics, but they are not the only ones. The Minister describes a visit with a successful old friend: "I asked him how it felt, going from the Commons to the Lords. 'It's like being moved from the animals to the vegetables,' he replied."

Here is a description of another visit, to the Master of an Oxford College:

> His face was red, his hair is now quite white, but his eyes were still the same clear, penetrating blue. Rather patriotic, really, . . . I asked the Master how he was feeling. He replied that he was feeling very old. But he smiled. "I'm already an anomaly, I shall soon be an anachronism, and I have every intention of dying an abuse."

In real life, the laugh lines emerge from more than one mouth. The balance of power among different people, differently situated, is frequently calibrated so that sometimes one individual wins, sometimes another does. And all, in good time, suffer defeats.

Situation comedies do not often honor these simple truths of everyday existence. *Yes Minister* does. It occupies, in consequence, a special territory just on the far side of literal believability where the tools of the comedy writer serve the more serious ends of social commentary.

A Life in Physics

RABI: SCIENTIST AND CITIZEN. By JOHN S. RIGDEN. *Basic Books. 352 pp. $21.95.*

Reviewed by JEFFREY MARSH

I.I. RABI is the grand old man of American science. Born in 1898, he is a survivor of a generation of young Americans who traveled to Europe in the 1920's to participate in the intellectual revolution that accompanied the invention of quantum mechanics. Rabi and his companions proved the equals of their European contemporaries in swiftly assimilating the new way of thinking and in

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applying it to the solution of a host of problems involving the behavior of matter on the atomic and subatomic scales. The fruits of this revolution, concerned seemingly with the most esoteric and impractical matters, were to transform first the scope of American physics and then the shape of the world.

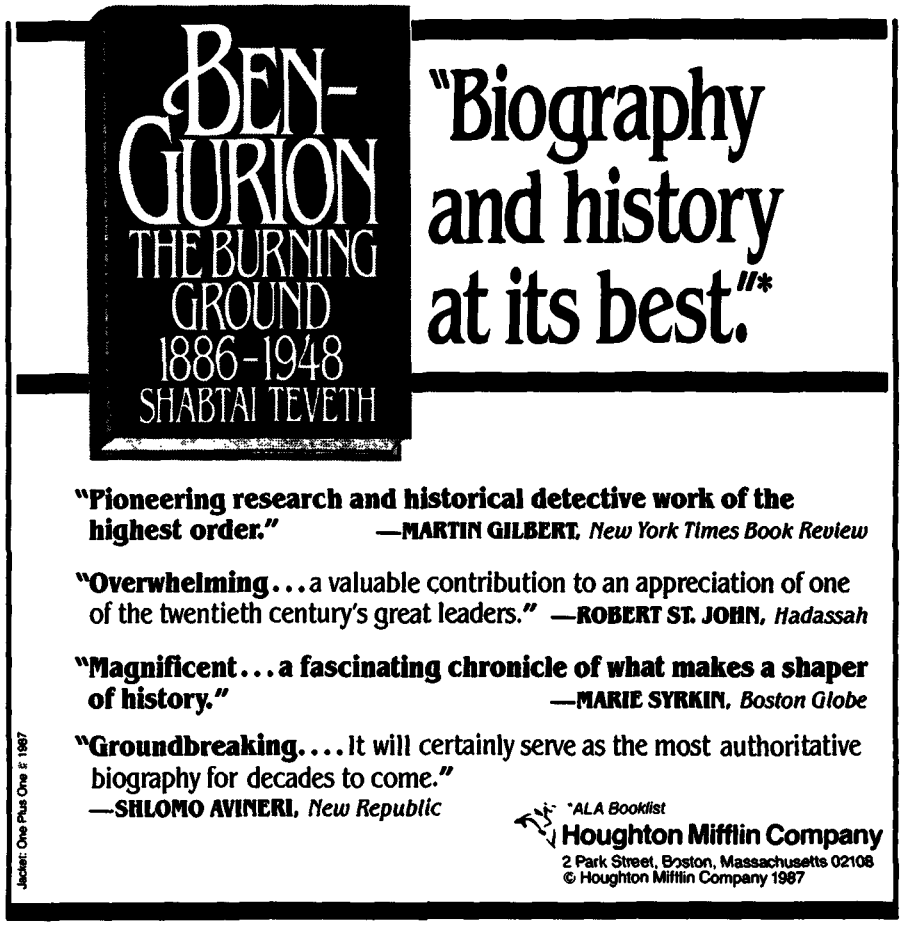
John S. Rigden's new biography of Rabi, the first of book length, shows us a figure playing a highly individualistic role on a series of larger and larger stages. We come upon Rabi as a bright youngster in the melting pot of early 20th-century New York. Brought as an infant from his birthplace in the Galician town of Rymanow, the young Rabi underwent a boyhood familiar to us from the accounts of countless others with similar immigrant backgrounds. After discovering the delights of the neighborhood public library, Rabi quickly abandoned the religious observances of his parents' Yiddish-speaking home in favor of the rationalism he derived from scientific texts. Although he flirted briefly with Marxism, his native common sense, buttressed by observation of his classmates and socialist friends, told him that "these people could never run a country." His drive toward Americanization led him away from the heavily Jewish academic public high schools of the era and instead to the emphatically non-Jewish Manual Arts High School, and then on to the even more alien territory of Cornell.

Having graduated with a degree in chemistry, a qualification useless to any Jew seeking a position in either industry or academia in the 1920's, Rabi for a few years moved from underemployment to unemployment before reenrolling in Cornell as a graduate student. It was only then, in his mid-twenties, that he realized the subject that really interested him was not chemistry but physics. He returned to New York City to study for a Ph.D. at Columbia, the institution where he was to spend most of his life.

By now he was aware of the revolutionary developments taking place as the new theory of quantum mechanics was being formulated, and after receiving his doctorate for an experimental thesis that showed great ingenuity and exceptional accuracy, he won a fellowship that enabled him to travel to Europe. Alone and unheralded, Rabi went first to Zurich, Munich, and Copenhagen, all centers of the new physics, and then to Hamburg, where he once again demonstrated his ingenuity at finding simple and elegant alternative ways to perform measurements that others had been able to carry out only by techniques much more ponderous and time-consuming. His talents made a sufficiently great impression in Europe that Werner Heisenberg, one of the founding giants of quantum mechanics, recommended him to Columbia's physics department.

During the decade following his return to the United States in 1929, Rabi's laboratory at Columbia served as the training ground for a new generation of gifted young American physicists. While notoriously uninterested in the tedious labor involved in setting up experiments and getting sensitive equipment to function properly, Rabi was an unfailing source of inspiration, providing original concepts and new techniques that continued to demonstrate his penetrating insight, particularly when it came to problems involving the interaction of matter and radiation. One of his ideas exploited the sharply focused absorption by atoms of radiation transmitted by magnetic fields whose frequency could be precisely controlled, and permitted the determination of fundamental physical quantities with great accuracy. This so-called resonance method, for which Rabi was to win a Nobel Prize, proved to have a host of applications, and serves as the basis of an extremely sensitive advanced diagnostic technique used in medicine today.

In November 1940, Rabi's life took a new turn, as the nation's scientific policy-makers shifted their at-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tention toward the problem of war preparedness. Rabi left Columbia for Cambridge, Mass., to help establish the MIT Radiation Laboratory, which was dedicated to the development of the new technology of radar. His intuitive grasp of the tactical and strategic applications of radar led him to press ahead with the rapid development of more sensitive and shorter wavelength systems suitable for a variety of military tasks, including airborne target detection, long-range navigation, and radar-controlled tracking of targets by artillery. The success of the Rad Lab in improving the fairly primitive equipment with which it began, together with the close collaboration that was fostered among the lab, its military clients, and the large-scale private industrial plants that swiftly put the new technology into mass production, proved to be a major triumph in the harnessing of science to the war effort.

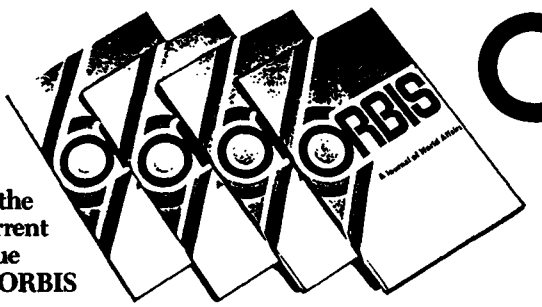
While radar was the focus of attention in Cambridge, across the continent the Manhattan Project was proceeding at Los Alamos. Despite pleas from his colleague and old friend J. Robert Oppenheimer, Rabi decided to stay with radar. Nevertheless, he served as a trusted senior-level consultant to the atomic-bomb project, bringing to bear both his experience at the Rad Lab and his acute insight into the psychology of fruitful research projects to argue Oppenheimer out of his initial enthusiasm for making the entire Los Alamos scientific staff into a uniformed military unit. When the first atomic bomb exploded at Alamogordo, Rabi was there as an observer, and indeed his was the winning entry in the sweepstakes on how big the explosion would be.

HAVING been awarded the Nobel Prize in 1944, by the end of the war Rabi was a public figure, and was appointed to serve on many newly created public committees. Thus, Rabi and Oppenheimer were the intellectual fathers of the Baruch plan for the internationalization of atomic energy, a Truman administration initiative that was rejected by the Soviet Union. Both were also members of the General Advisory Committee of the Atomic Energy Commission (AEC) in 1949 when it recommended against the development of the hydrogen bomb.

At the time, it was far from clear that such a fusion-based superweapon was technically feasible, but the major objections in Rabi's mind were strategic and moral, having to do with the impracticality of such prodigious power for any purpose other than the mass destruction of life. Rabi was greatly disturbed when President Truman, following the views of AEC Commissioner Lewis Strauss, and inspired by Edward Teller and other advocates of the hydrogen bomb, decided to go ahead with its development. Still, Rabi continued in later years to serve as a senior scientific adviser to the government, a role enhanced in the 50's by his personal acquaintance with President Eisenhower. His position as an elder statesman was certified when he was invited to lecture at Harvard on the relationship between science and the humanities; his thoughts on the subject inspired C.P. Snow several years later to deliver his own more famous and controversial "Two Cultures" lecture series.

By now, Rabi has been an emeritus professor at Columbia for almost twenty years. In a one-page personal epilogue to this book, he states his longstanding concern that American scientists and teachers have done an extremely poor job of communicating to the public the achievements of 20th-century science, as well as his hope that the nation's educational system will recover in time to meet the current challenge of international competition.

JOHN RIGDEN has attempted to cover a long life in a comparatively short book; that being so, he would have been wiser to have chosen a more strongly focused emphasis. He is most successful in giving a sense of Rabi's scientific style, involving deep and highly intuitive thought into the basic physics of a problem with the aim



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of finding a conceptually clean and instrumentally elegant way of performing significant experiments. But the reader previously unacquainted with the rudiments of quantum theory is unlikely to understand very much about the physics involved, and the introductory chapter, designed to provide an overview of Rabi's influence on American physics, comes across as a sort of laundry list for the cognoscenti.

The biography disappoints in other ways as well. Rabi, as presented by Rigden, is a uniquely moral figure, with faults indeed but also with a perspective transcending that of other men, especially non-scientists. For that reason one would have especially appreciated more depth in the treatment of Rabi's opinions on matters beyond physics, but all too often Rigden merely quotes them approvingly. Thus, he presents Rabi's side of the debate over the development of the hydrogen bomb, and leaves it at that. Similarly, he gives us a number of Rabi's statements deploring the failure of Americans to appreciate the Soviets' point of view, or the failure of Israelis to appreciate the Arab point of view, and suggests that these alleged failures are due to a lack of intellectual awareness. Rigden does not consider the possibility that on these decidedly non-scientific matters, those holding such views may actually show a superior awareness to Rabi's.

One would also have appreciated a greater attempt to explore some of the evident complexities of Rabi's personality. Rigden tells us, for example, that Rabi's given names were Israel Isaac, but that an elementary-school official later Anglicized them to Isidor, a name he continues to use in place of Israel. Later in life, however, Rabi deliberately brought back the Isaac, although in his published articles he uses just the two initials I.I. Meanwhile, those closest to him, including his wife and his sister, refer to him simply as "Rabi." All this surely betokens some sort of struggle over his Jewish identity, about which one is naturally curious to know more.

Similarly, on the question of religion. As a boy, he struck a famous compromise with his parents whereby at his bar-mitzvah celebration he delivered a speech in Yiddish on the workings of the electric light. His father regarded this, together with his growing laxity in religious observance, as an expression of spiritual laziness. About this aspect of Rabi's character, too, one is curious to know a good deal more than his all-accepting biographer vouchsafes.

Mitterrand by Stendahl

THE BLACK AND THE RED: FRANÇOIS MITTERRAND, THE STORY OF AN AMBITION. By CATHERINE NAY. *Translated by* ALAN SHERIDAN. *Harcourt Brace Jovanovich. 404 pp. $19.95.*

Reviewed by ROGER KAPLAN

IF François Mitterrand runs for a second seven-year term as President of France next year and wins, it will surprise no one. In a long political career he has taught his countrymen to expect of him perseverance beyond every other quality. Having been for two decades the Old Man of the French Left, he is now the Old Man of France. Depending on what he chooses to do next, he may turn out to be the Old Man of the West. Surely he deserves some attention.

In France, of course, he has been receiving attention since the early 1950's, when as a promising and ambitious young minister he served in most of the short-lived governments of the Fourth Republic. Himself an elegant if somewhat pompous writer, much given to generalizations and lofty meditations about the Meaning of It All, Mitterrand has been the object of several book-length studies in France. The English translation of one of these, by the broadcast journalist Catherine Nay, is thus a welcome event (though it must be said that the translation itself is quite poor). Written in a lively style, Miss Nay's book is detailed to a fault. The reader, however, should be warned that it assumes

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a fair degree of familiarity with the principal events of French history and is essentially an "inside-politics" study rather than a broad biographical and historical effort. The publishers might at least have had the consideration to provide American readers with chronologies and schematic analyses of the constitutional and political structures of the Fourth and Fifth Republics.

Still, *The Black and the Red* does make up in part for the absence of material on Mitterrand in English—such absence being a symptom of the fading importance of France in our view of the international scene in the 1970's and 1980's. Correct or not, this perception of France as a nation in decline actually has something to do with François Mitterrand. He is a man who throughout his life has spoken out eloquently for decency and justice; he has visibly let his heart, a generous heart in a remote and somewhat enigmatic personality, rule his head. But the head obeying the heart's sentiments has been filled with the anachronistic ideas of 19th-century socialism.

These ideas were not exactly programmed for success, not when they were formulated and even less so in the conditions of the late 20th century. Mitterrand's first (and perhaps only) presidential term, 1981-1988, insofar as it has implemented these selfsame ideas, is partly responsible for the slowing-down of what had been, unbeknownst to many Americans, a period of rapid economic growth in France known as the "Thirty Glorious Years," a period that had restored France to a leadership position in Europe unmatched since the 18th century. For all his generous rhetoric, Mitterrand turned out to be ungenerous toward his countrymen.

François Mitterrand based his career, as Miss Nay demonstrates, on being an outsider and a naysayer. On the margins of the anti-republican Right before World War II, this son of a prosperous bourgeois family entered the Resistance when, having escaped from a *Stalag* after the military catastrophe of 1940, he saw that Marshall Pétain would not save the nation from the Germans. But he was unable, in the Resistance, to come to terms with the leader of Free France, Charles de Gaulle.

The nonconformist pattern persisted after the war. He did not join what should have been his natural political party, the centrist *Mouvement Républicain Populaire*, preferring to take part in a small group slightly more to the Right, the misnamed Democratic and Socialist Union of the Resistance (UDSR). Miss Nay's title, which is of course an ironic takeoff on Stendhal's great novel of ambition, suggests accurately that the course of Mitterrand's own ambition took him from the Catholic Right to the secular Left; but it was not until well into the 1960's, when de Gaulle was established in power, that Mitterrand described himself as a socialist in a serious sense, that is, in the sense of wanting to get rid of bourgeois liberal democracy and the economic and legal institutions it is founded on.

In the musical-chairs governments of the Fourth Republic, Mitterrand, neither outstanding nor unconventional, was the youngest minister. The Fourth Republic was faced with three problems: empire (also known as "decolonization"), economic modernization ("taking off"), and political stability. Mitterrand had fresh thoughts about none of these. He supported the colonial wars in Indochina and Algeria; he had no economic views at all; and the perennial instability of the Fourth Republic suited his political temperament.

On this period of Mitterrand's life, which takes him through his young adulthood, Miss Nay is informative without being especially enlightening. As she puts it, Mitterrand in those years was "a man in search of inner unity, a project, or an idea . . . [he] oscillated between Center-Right and Center-Left with one constant: a deep-seated, virulent anti-Communism." But then, so did France itself in those years. The country was doing its best to avoid the dismal alternatives of Communism—which received up to a quarter of the votes in elections—and

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Italian-style immobilism. The French were bemused and confused; unable to save their empire, unsure why they should even try to. Miss Nay makes it clear that Mitterrand fit right in.

He fit in, but he also stayed curiously aloof. When in 1958 a coup in Algiers nearly brought down the Republic, Mitterrand was among a tiny number (outside the Communists) who refused to grant any credit to the man who rescued it, Charles de Gaulle. It was virtually ordained, after this, that he would refuse to support de Gaulle's plans for a new Constitution (based on the one the French people had rejected a decade earlier) establishing the Fifth Republic.

Miss Nay helps us to understand Mitterrand's determined "no," but not the vehemence of his refusal. Mitterrand immediately accused de Gaulle of dictatorial tendencies—this, of the man who had saved France first from fascists, then from Communists, and finally from military putschists. He wrote a violent pamphlet, *Le Coup d'État Permanent*, which denied the legitimacy of the Fifth Republic. In 1959 he stated, in print: "*Anything is to be welcomed* that will bring an end to the heartless politico-military coalition that currently governs us, holds the state in its claws, and lacks in true greatness" (emphasis added). According to Miss Nay, "If this meant allying himself with the Communist devil, François Mitterrand was prepared to do so."

FRANCE is a country whose people have an easy taste for irony. The novelist André Malraux, de Gaulle's culture minister, once boasted that "Between us and the Communists, there is nothing." François Mitterrand, whose career seemed to have been prematurely ruined in 1958, was, in a sense, the one who heard him best. With all his anachronisms, de Gaulle had nonetheless been able to defeat the old Right, temporarily marginalize the Left, and give France an opportunity to modernize politically, economically, and culturally. In such an environment Mitterrand, true to his Fourth Republic roots, felt underemployed. Yet the real anachronism was the Fourth Republic itself, and so were the ideas that Mitterrand now turned to.

These were the ideas of the Marxist Left, as encrusted in the psyches of French intellectuals in a peculiarly abstract and dogmatic form. They were a far less real—and far less prudent—guide to statecraft than were the notions of national glory and international influence that had tantalized and motivated de Gaulle and his followers. Miss Nay suggests there was nothing much more than political opportunism in Mitterrand's adoption of these ideas in order to run as a candidate of the united Left (though not as a member of the Socialist party) in the presidential campaign of 1965 against de Gaulle. He calculated (like Malraux) that the Gaullists were impregnable from the Right. The Center could not be mobilized against them. Therefore, he must rally the Left. And to rally the Left, by definition, meant either destroying the Communists or ending the schism that divided them from democrats.

When, in 1972, Mitterrand finally convinced the Socialist party to sign the notorious pact for a "Common Government Program" which had been proposed by the French Communist party at intervals since the early 1950's, the Communists still had a larger popular following than the Socialists. The Socialists had been enervated by the contradictions between their doctrinaire Marxist rhetoric and their relatively practical approach to politics, which was founded on support for NATO, the Common Market, and Israel. Mitterrand had never been on cordial terms with the old Socialist leaders (even though he had served in a coalition government headed by Guy Mollet, the successor of Léon Blum). When he took over the party, following intrigues that are probably incomprehensible to a non-Frenchman, he was joined by a large contingent of the so-called *gauche soixantehuitarde*, or generation of '68. This generation's contribution to the Left, beneath a vaguely libertarian veneer, was to abandon the anti-Communist and anti-Soviet positions of the old democratic Left, and also the basis

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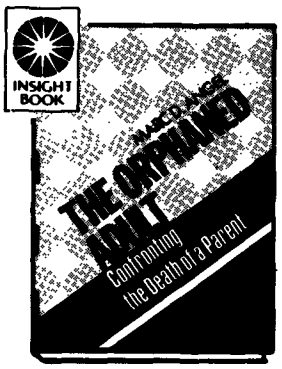

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of its opposition to capitalism. It was not with the interests of the workers in mind that Mitterrand and the generation of '68 opposed private property (however wrong-headed in itself that might be) but rather in the name of total abstractions like "life" or the "Third World." "*Le Socialisme,*" intoned Mitterrand, "*c'est la justice.*"

Although he wrote many articles and several books during the long campaigns of the 1970's, and although he engaged in polemics constantly with the various factions that made up the Socialist party, Mitterrand, like many men who convert to socialism more with the heart than with the head, never really got beyond such platitudes. He wrote and spoke without irony about altering the basic structures of society to rescue "the people" from various tyrannies, but he never offered much evidence that he had reflected seriously and deeply about political institutions and social structures.

THE great irony of Mitterrand's career was that by the time the French people decided the Left represented a trustworthy, moderate alternative to conservatives grown complacent after twenty-three years in power, both the Left itself and Mitterrand were convinced that they had won approval for a revolutionary program, complete with Communist participation. It is here that Miss Nay's book is particularly disappointing, due to her lack of interest in ideas. François Mitterrand arrived in power in 1981 armed with a catalogue of ideas that could only have emerged from the overheated factional debates of a self-consciously revolutionary movement that (a) was determined to destroy "capitalism"; (b) considered "U.S. imperialism" as serious a threat to peace and liberty in Western Europe (and the "third world") as the Soviet variety; and, in consequence of these (c) took it as axiomatic that the Communist voters, without whose support the "People of the Left" (*le peuple de gauche*) could not win, deserved representation in the government. Which they of course eventually got.

What became evident within a few months of the Left's victories in May and June 1981, however, was that these were ideas whose time not only had passed, but whose time was clearly understood by the French people to have passed. Indeed, Mitterrand discovered very soon after his triumph that the intellectuals, whom he had correctly assumed to be part of the family of the Left (with outstanding exceptions), were deserting him. This meant that there was virtually no one, outside the lugubrious editorialists of *Le Monde* (a newspaper whose circulation declined substantially in the early 1980's), to explain and defend the Socialist experiment to a recalcitrant population, which tended naturally enough to focus on the disastrous effects of the government spending binge. Five years into his seven-year presidential term, Mitterrand's Socialists lost control of the legislature to a coalition of conservative parties with which they now share power in an arrangement of *cohabitation.*

Still, although in the early years of his Presidency Mitterrand's understanding of economics was based on demagogy and sentimentality—he sincerely believed he could win votes by boasting that he owned no stocks—his understanding of foreign policy turned out to be more realistic than his pronouncements had led many to fear. While indulging, for domestic consumption, in rhetorical anti-Americanism in the Mexican manner, Mitterrand turned out to be no worse in foreign policy than one expects from French presidents. To be sure, wrecking an economy is no way to sustain a serious defense policy: nonetheless, the president and his very able defense minister, Charles Hernu (eventually forced to resign in the *Rainbow Warrior* affair), were more anti-Soviet than their predecessors. They championed the French nuclear deterrent against the leftist dogmas Mitterrand himself had long subscribed to, and they supported the NATO positions on the nuclear defense of Europe, particularly during the episode of the Pershing II's, when Mitterrand memorably stated that "The Soviets have SS-20's; the West has pacifists."

Miss Nay generally agrees with Mitterrand's friends that he never abandoned the hatred of the Communists that he developed in the Fourth Republic. Skeptics like Jean-François Revel reply that the Socialists nevertheless allowed themselves to be psychologically and intellectually "colonized" by the Communists. In fact, in still another historical irony, the French Communist party has been damaged by the very strategy of the Union of the Left which brought Mitterrand to power. From an electoral base of 25 percent it is down to below 10. Some supporters appear to have migrated to the xenophobic National Front.

WHAT is not contestable is that the Socialists, with about a third of the vote, are now, with Chirac's Gaullists, one of the two major parties in France. For this they can thank François Mitterrand —the outsider who did not even have a party card when they chose him as their leader. For he did bring the Left back into the mainstream—if only by demonstrating, in office, that revolutionary rhetoric would remain only that, rhetoric. As for the damage caused by his lyrical economic and social policies, this, though it may well have exceeded its demonstration-value, has not been irreparable.

By the end of Mitterrand's term and the onset of the present *cohabitation,* several things had become clarified about France's relalation to socialism. Miss Nay puts the case this way: "Legislative socialism was not made to last, governmental socialism would be beaten, popular socialism was in mourning, and ideological socialism was in full retreat." She neglects to mention the significant fact that the party nevertheless marches stoutly on.

Miss Nay's book would have benefited from a fuller working-out of her pithy summary of France in the 1980's. But in a sense, the story of François Mitterrand is enough.

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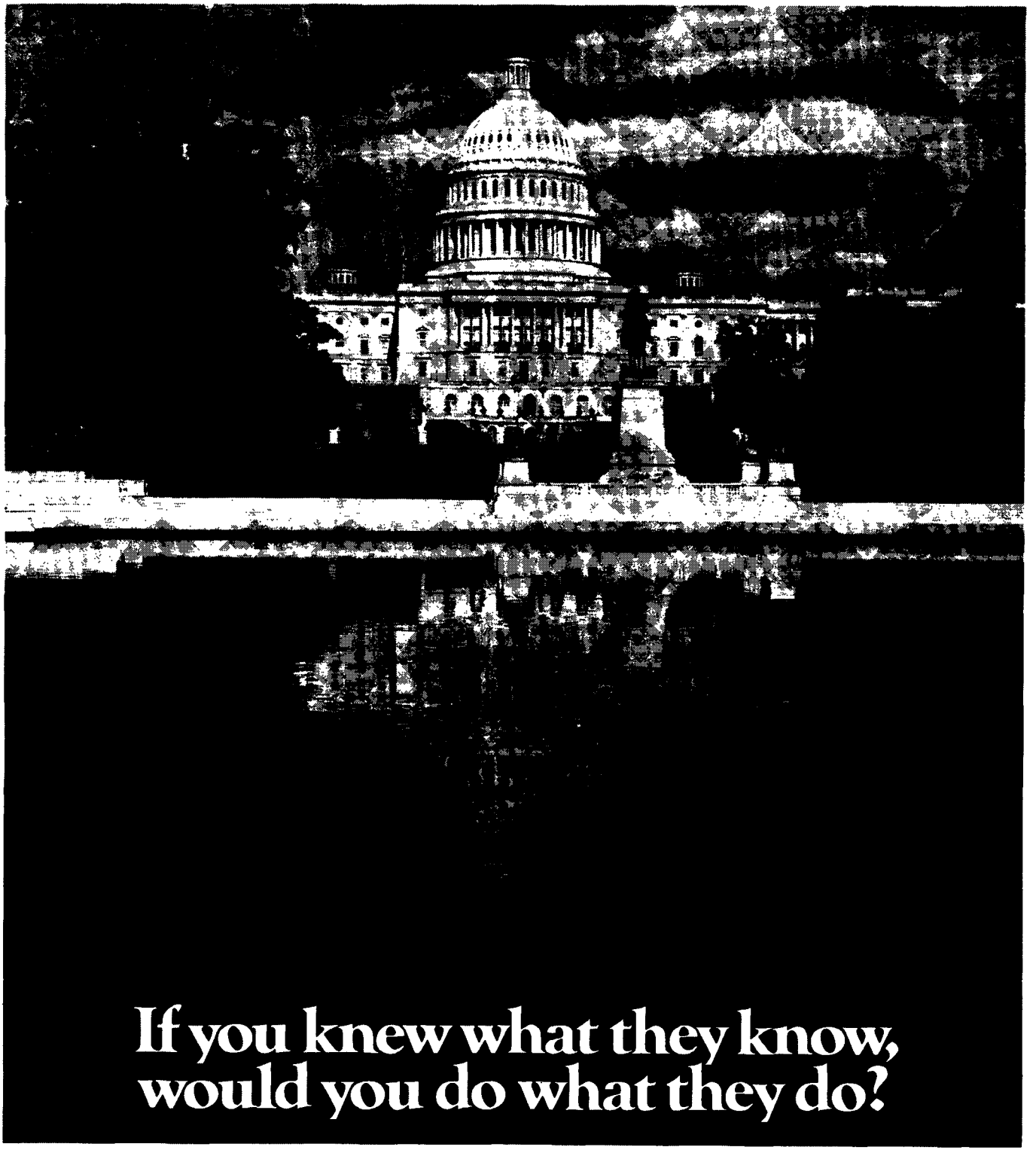

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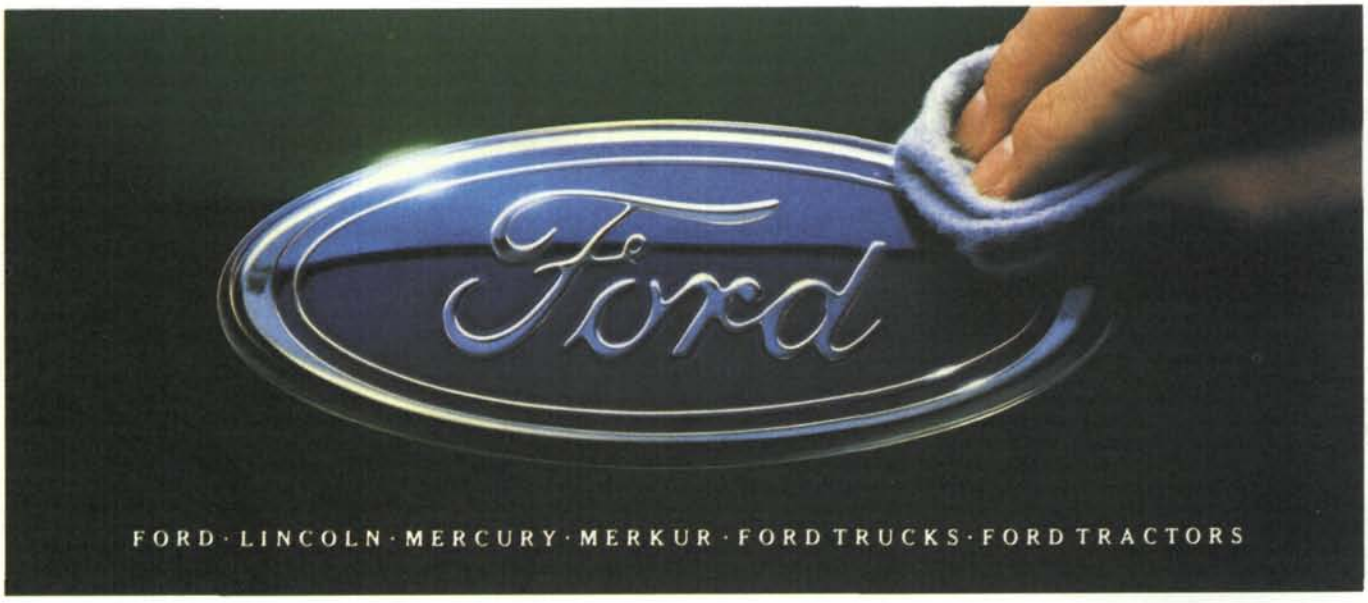

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